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Entered, according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1846,
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the young Grace Elliot draw her veil more closely around her, as she issued from her home to pay a parting visit to the newly-made grave of her father, accompanied by her scarce less bereaved and sorrowing cousin, Isabel Douglass. And surely never did impatient heart shut out a lovelier landscape than that home presented on this May morning. The verdant bank on which the house was built sloped gently down to a broad river on whose tranquil bosom the sunbeams lay in a column of golden light, wooing the eye farther and farther on, till at the distance of five miles it was met by ocean's wide expanse. If the glance was averted from this magnificent prospect, it rested upon oaks which had flung their gigantic arms above that spot before the memory of living man, and which still promised in their undecaying grandeur to wave their sombre drapery above many successive generations. Even when Grace looked sadly down she found the glad sun mirrored in the full cup of many a flower which Nature, prodigal of beauty, had strown at her feet, while, at every movement, her dress shook from some shrub the starry dews with which Night had robed it.

In this abode of loveliness had Grace first seen the light, and here, at five years old, had Isabel found a home and a father with her mother's brother, Mr. Elliot. Left a widower in the prime of life, this gentleman had placed his household and his infant daughter under the matronly care of his elder sister, Miss Elliot, who had resided with him but a few months when the death of Isabel's mother sent her too to claim an interest in the maiden's kindly heart. Time had passed lightly over that quiet family. They were not gay, for the master of a mansion ordinarily gives the tone to his household, and Mr. Elliot could not be gay —the memory of his wife dwelling ever as a shadow at his side. Still it was a shadow of grace and beauty, mel-

lowing and subduing, but not obscuring the brightness of his life. He had ever a cheerful word for his children and a kindly smile for his dependants.

Such was the serene atmosphere in which Grace and Isabel had grown to the dawn of womanhood—Grace being now fifteen and Isabel one year older. The first cloud that rose in their sky had burst in wild tempest over their heads. The father and the guardian had been stricken down in his strength, and they were now weeping over his grave. Yet not alone for him fell their tears. His death had been the signal for many sorrows. His will had committed them during their minority to the charge of his only brother, who, having married a lady of New York, resided in that city. To-morrow they were to leave their beloved home in the warm, friendly South, for one in a colder clime,—and the dwellers in that clime for whose society they must exchange that of their kind indulgent aunt, might they not prove that

"The cold in clime are cold in blood?"

Even the servants who had been familiar to them for years—who had ministered to their childish wants, borne with their childish caprices, and shared their childish sports—claimed a place in their memories and their regrets. Arrived, however, at the grassy knoll surrounded by a white paling and shaded by pines and cedars, which had been for more than a century the burial-place of the Elliots, all were for a time forgotten, except him who lay within the little mound at their feet. What a rushing flood of memories overwhelm the heart at such moments! How life-like are the pictures in which every varying expression of those now unchanging features passes before us! We remember the glad smile with which they welcomed us, and we feel that there is no joy in returning to a home

where that is not—we recall the tender glances which soothed our childish griefs, and we are ready to submit to any of life's innumerable ills to win back to our darkened world that one beam of heavenly light—we see again the brow shadowed by some fault of ours, and our souls are bowed down with unutterable sorrow, and we cry to Heaven in our anguish for some voice from the world of spirits to assure us that the shadow has passed away. Grace Elliot sank on her knees beside her father's grave, and sobbed with convulsive agony, while Isabel stood beside her in deep and overpowering, if less tempestuous grief. Alarmed at last by the wild and increasing agitation of Grace, she put her arm around her, and strove gently to draw her away.

"Let me alone, Isabel!" Grace exclaimed; "let me die here, for there are none left to love me now."

"There are many left to love you, Grace; for their sakes go with me—we will not go quite away, only go to yonder spring where you can bathe your swollen face, and you can come back again if you desire it."

Grace did not stir.

"Then, for his sake who would have been grieved to see you abandoning yourself thus to your sorrow, come with me, Grace," said Isabel, subduing her voice to a reverential whisper; and Grace rose, and leaning on her cousin, suffered her to lead her away.

They passed beyond the enclosure to a slight elevation, from whose summit grew a lofty magnolia shading a spring of the clearest water. Near this spring Isabel seated her cousin, and placing herself at her side, supported her head upon her shoulder, while she dipped her hand in the cool fount and pressed it to her burning brow. For some time Grace remained quite still, with closed eyes—then, her features becoming suddenly convulsed again, she sobbed

out, "Oh! it is bitter to feel that there are none left to love you."

"You cannot feel that, dear Grace," said Isabel, soothingly, "remember our kind aunt."

"But we leave her to-morrow."

"Yes; but then we go to another uncle and aunt, who, I do not doubt, will be very kind to us."

"I did not speak of kindness; strangers may be kind to us, but they cannot love us, and my grief is that I shall be separated from all that have known and loved me." And with somewhat of petulance in her manner, Grace raised her head from her cousin's shoulder, and withdrew herself from her supporting arm.

Isabel's face flushed, and an expression of wounded feeling passed over it. It was gone, however, in a moment—resentment to his child could not exist so near her uncle's grave—and she drew Grace again to her side, as she asked, "Will you be so separated while I am with you?"

"You did not say any thing of yourself," said Grace, evasively.

"What could I say that you did not already know, dear Grace? Have we not played together, and studied together, had the same dear friends, and shared the same joys and sorrows? and how can we help loving each other dearly?"

Isabel kissed her cousin fondly, and an expression of pleasure—almost a smile—stole over the features of Grace, as nestling closer to the bosom on which she rested, she said softly, "Promise always to love me so, dear Isabel, and I shall not mind going away."

"I do promise, dear Grace, to love you always as a true sister. And now let us go home, for Aunt Nancy's sake—she was so much afraid that this visit would make you ill. Come, dear Grace,—come, for my sake."

Grace was always subdued by tenderness, and though she turned her tearful eyes towards the burial-ground and uttered a reluctant "O Isabel!—must we go?" she offered no resistance to the gentle force which drew her from her seat and guided her towards her home.

Aunt Nancy,—as Isabel and Grace had been accustomed to call Miss Elliot,—was the very embodiment of all kindly and gentle feelings. The years which had changed the soft, rich brown of her luxuriant hair into gray, and destroyed the fine proportions of her once slender and graceful form, had not dimmed the light of her clear blue eye, or stolen from her countenance its expression of contentment and benevolence, the impress of a mind grateful for her own lot, and desirous to extend the happiness she enjoyed to others. Her brother's death had been a deep affliction to her, yet scarcely, perhaps, harder to endure than the approaching parting with her nieces, the nurslings of her love, for whom, for more than twelve years, she had lived. Had the proposal to send them away been made by her brother during his life, she would have opposed it strongly, though aware that in their native state, Georgia, at that period, the requisites to the completion of an accomplished education could with difficulty be commanded. But the wishes of the dead were sacred in her eyes, and though the preparations for their departure, which had engaged her on the morning of their visit to the family burial-place, had kept vividly before her for hours the thought of her coming loneliness, no murmur had mingled with her regret. In the presence of Isabel and Grace, Miss Elliot had hitherto commanded herself to speak cheerfully, but many tears had fallen in secret at the thought of the cold and distant home to which she was about to consign them. For Grace especially had she sorrowed,—not that her love for her was greater, but that she

thought her less able to bear even the shadow of unkindness.

Never had Isabel been made to feel herself an alien to the hearts that had adopted her. Often had the stranger, entertained by Mr. Elliot, been surprised to hear one of the two lovely children sporting around him, call him uncle. That one word was the only visible distinction between the child born in his house and her who had found a shelter there from the desolation of her own home. Yet Mr. Elliot could not but feel a deeper love for the child of his own gentle wife, who smiled upon him with *her* soft eyes, and spoke to him in *her* very tones; and Miss Elliot regarded Grace with that peculiar tenderness felt by a mother for the youngest and feeblest of her offspring—a feeling engendered by that delicacy of constitution which caused the friends of Grace to experience, for years, the most trembling anxiety for her health, and even for her life. The same kind words were spoken to Isabel and to Grace, but when they were addressed to the latter, the voice assumed a tenderer tone—the same affectionate looks were turned on them, but they lingered longest upon Grace. Even their nurses, if there was a contest between the children for a toy, would say, "Gib 'em to your cousin, Miss Isabel—you won't fret your poor, sick cousin."

As Grace grew older, her constitution acquired vigor, and now all remains of its early feebleness seemed to have passed away; but the gentle tones and melting looks and yielding love had become a habit to those around her, and a necessity to her. Child of the sun, she was chilled by a passing shadow.

There was nothing in what we have described to check the young, warm impulses of Isabel. She had never been repulsed from the arms which embraced her cousin—cold unkindness had never forced a tear to her sunny eyes.

If she sometimes saw that her cousin was an object of greater consideration than herself, she also saw that it was for a reason which commended itself to her understanding, and won the assent of her generous heart—she was a sufferer. To this claim Isabel yielded without compulsion, and thus the same circumstances which made constant demonstrations of tenderness necessary to Grace, rendered Isabel independent of them. To her, love was like the air of Heaven—invisible, intangible, it yet encircled her soul, and she knew it, for in it was her life; but for Grace its depths must be stirred, and soft breezes must ever assure her of its presence. Alas! that those gentle breezes should ever become a wild and desolating tempest!

Miss Elliot had seen Isabel and Grace depart on the sad visit of the morning with reluctance, and when they proposed, in the afternoon, to walk to that part of the plantation on which the houses inhabited by the negroes on Mr. Elliot's estate were situated, she strenuously opposed it.

"I cannot consent to it, my dear children," she said, "you both need rest and quiet before you set out on your journey. Your head is burning now, Grace, and any farther agitation will make you ill. After you are gone, I will go around to all the negroes and bid them good-by for you."

She had drawn Grace to her bosom, and tears shone in the eyes of both at the thought of how soon that time would arrive.

"But Aunt Nancy," said Isabel, "we promised Maum Hagar to see her again before we went—if you do not like to have Grace go, I will go alone and tell her—"

"I think I ought to go," interposed Grace; "I may never see her again."

"Then, my darlings, I will go with you," said Aunt Nancy, whose kindly nature could not oppose itself to such a reason.

The negro houses were about half a mile distant from their home, and they could just catch a glimpse of the setting sun through the rich foliage of surrounding trees when they reached them. The first in the group was that occupied by Maum Hagar, an aged woman who had been for several years quite blind, and by one of her grand-daughters who attended on her. The old woman was sitting in the warm May air before her door, clad in a clean though coarse wrapper and petticoat, and wearing on her head a handkerchief striped with blue—not disposed in the turban-like fashion common to the younger servants, but knotted beneath the chin. Her eyes were open, and there was nothing in their appearance that indicated blindness. As she heard approaching footsteps, she turned her face in the direction whence they came—a smile passed over her face a moment after, and she said with evident pleasure, "'Tis my good young ladies come to see ole Maum Hagar for de last time."

"For the last time before we go away, Maumer," answered Grace, as she laid her small, white hand in the dark-colored one stretched out to her,—"but we are coming back again in four years, and I want to know what we shall bring for you."

"Ah, my missis! before four years go, Hagar hope to be where she'll neber hab no more want."

"Do you want any thing now, Maum Hagar?" asked Miss Elliot kindly.

"No, missis, not'in'—not'in' 'cept sometimes to go to my rest—so many handsome, rich, strong people, all gone before, and here ole wortless Hagar yet, cumb'rin' de ground."

"Don't talk so sadly, Maumer," said Isabel, "you know we all love you, and Grace and I would be grieved indeed if we thought we were never to see you again."

"My good young missis, dat must be as de Lord will, and we wont griebe for him will."

A few minutes after, the old woman placed her hand on the head of Grace, and then passing it slowly over her face, said, "Ah, Miss Grace, you bery like your poor 'ma —jist sich long curly hair she been hab. Well, you couldn't be like a better or a handsomer lady—I often see her sweet smile, and I tink she must hab dat same smile now in Heaben. Miss Isabel's de tallest yet," she continued, raising her other hand to Isabel's face, "and I tink she fabor de Elliots—don't she, Miss Nancy?"

"I think she does," said Miss Elliot.

"Well! you're like a good family, and a kind and a handsome one too, my dear child. You been both good young ladies to me—de Lord bless you both, and make His good word what you read so often to ole Hagar your comfort; and if I neber hear your sweet voices here agen, may I hear 'em singing God's praises in Heaben. Amen."

The old woman's sightless balls were lifted to the sky, and tears rolled down her cheeks, while the two girls sobbed aloud. As she concluded, she raised a hand of each to her lips, and Aunt Nancy, saying to her that she would see her again to-morrow, led them away.

As the evening passed on, a painful oppression lay upon Miss Elliot's heart. She became silent, and her looks, tender and mournful, rested now on Grace and now on Isabel, but they lingered longer on the first. The sound of the horn summoning the negroes of the plantation to their house of prayer, seemed to rouse her from her long revery, and after glancing at the mantel clock, which

pointed to the hour of nine, she rose and rang a small bell. Almost immediately, the servants employed about the house, twelve or fourteen in number,—some with heads blanched by age, and others at the very opening of life,—entered, bringing with them a bench, on which they seated themselves. Isabel had placed on a table before her aunt a large Bible. Miss Elliot drew it towards her, and read one of those psalms in which David pours forth in strains at once lofty and touching, his sorrow and his faith—his disappointment in all earthly expectation, and his hope and trust in God. She closed the book, and all, servants and mistresses, knelt together before Him who is no respecter of persons; and she, who since Mr. Elliot's death had been a priestess in that household, offered up, in the name of all, thanksgiving and praise to Him who had protected them through the day, and earnest prayer for His continued guardianship. Especially did she commend to His fatherly guidance those who were going far from them. The feelings whose expression to man had been so carefully repressed, were now laid bare before Him to whom it is our delightful privilege to confess our sins, and reveal our sorrows—our "High Priest, who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." She prayed for God's compassion on the human love which clung so closely to His gifts, that it feared to trust them for a season again to His keeping. In the simplest language,—for Aunt Nancy pretended to no scholarship,—she entreated Him to go with their loved ones, to fulfil to them His own gracious promise that He would be a Father to the fatherless, to guard them from all evil, but, above all, from sin. "Our love would cry, Father! let light and gladness be ever around them; but if Thou in Thy wisdom shouldst encompass them with darkness, be Thou still a light within their hearts, and make Thy word a lamp unto their feet." She who thus

presented the desires of her own heart and of every other, in that little assemblage, had found strength in prayer; her voice, at first low and faltering, became composed, though deeply earnest, while the objects of her supplication knelt weeping beside her, and more than one sob from the servants' bench told that the feelings she expressed had found an echo there.

Immediately after the evening devotions, Grace retired for the night. Miss Elliot accompanied her to her room, and dismissing her usual attendant, assisted her to undress. How many tender associations were connected with that simple act! Memory pictured Grace as she lay, long years ago, a helpless infant in her arms, with that same cherub smile which still lighted her face in hours of joy, dimpling her round, fair cheek, and with those soft blue eyes pleading for love, even as now they seemed to do; and as she held her to her bosom and kissed her tenderly, in answer to that plea, her heart tremblingly asked when and how they should meet again.

Isabel was still in the parlor in which they had spent the evening when her aunt returned there. She had removed the candles to another room, and stood at a window looking out upon the landscape lighted by the soft beams of "the young May moon." Absorbed in her own thoughts, Miss Elliot stood beside her before she was aware of her entrance.

"Oh, Aunt Nancy!" she exclaimed, "how I long for one glance at the book of fate, just to see whether, when Grace and I return to our home four years hence, we shall find every thing here exactly as we leave it."

"Is it quite certain that Grace and you will return four years hence?"

"As certain as our lives. You know, by my uncle's will, we are to be both considered of age in that time; and

when once we are free to act as we please, what can hinder our return?"

"Your own pleasure; you may not then desire to come."

"Aunt Nancy! Can you believe that we shall so soon forget our earliest friend, and this dear, beautiful home!"

As Isabel spoke, she took her aunt's hand, and drawing it through her arm, held it pressed close against her heart.

"No, my child," answered Miss Elliot, with emotion, "I do not fear that you can forget us, but you may find dearer friends and a more beautiful home."

"Look there!" said Isabel, pointing from the window, "and acknowledge the last to be impossible; and for the first, ask yourself, Aunt Nancy, whether four years are likely to erase the impressions of twelve."

"Those twelve years were years of childhood; their traces were light and feeble, compared with the deep, earnest emotions of womanhood, on which you are just entering. But it is not your feelings to me that occupy my thoughts and awaken my deepest anxiety now, Isabel. Your love is very precious to me, but I can leave that, as well as all other earthly good that concerns myself only, to God's disposal. It is your happiness,—yours and Grace's,—that I find it hard to commit to Him. In the next four years, that happiness, as far as earth is concerned, may be decided—nay, the associations you form in those years may extend their influence into eternity." Miss Elliot paused for a moment, as if overcome by the vision that presented itself to her view; then, clasping Isabel to her bosom, she cried, "Oh, Isabel! how can I leave you with strangers during these years!"

"God will go with us, Aunt Nancy," said Isabel softly, her cheerful, brave spirit subdued to somewhat of awe by the emotion of her usually gentle, quiet aunt.

"Thank you, my child, for recalling to me my only comfort, and promise me, Isabel, that you will seek His blessing, earnestly, constantly."

"I will," whispered Isabel,—her head still resting on that kindly bosom.

"Then I need not fear for you, Isabel, for He is ever found of those who seek Him; but, indeed, my apprehensions have ever been less for you than for Grace—she is so helpless, so dependent; what will she do among strangers?"

"I shall be with her, Aunt Nancy."

"True! and you must love her and watch over her very tenderly, Isabel; her father was very good to you."

"Good, indeed! Was I not as his own child to him while he lived, and has he not provided most generously for my future wants? Oh, Aunt Nancy! I never was half grateful or affectionate enough to him while he lived," cried the weeping Isabel, with a sudden access of that remorseful tenderness with which the dead are often remembered.

"Then, Isabel, make it up by your devotion to his darling Grace, and his spirit will bless you; you can thus repay all that either he or I have done for you."

Isabel's was a nature not easily wrought to the expression of strong emotion, but it was capable of a generous and lofty enthusiasm which, once excited, set at defiance all the dictates of a selfish reserve. Now, raising her clasped hands and streaming eyes upward, she exclaimed, "Here, then, Aunt Nancy, where you and my beloved uncle received me and sheltered me from every breath of unkindness, do I promise to devote myself to your Grace, with more than a sister's love. If she be sick or in sorrow, I will nurse and sooth her so tenderly that she will dream you are beside her; her happiness shall be as dear

to me as my own—nay, dearer; for remembering that I owe all to her father, I will hold no possession too valuable, no feeling too powerful, no hope too dear, to be relinquished, if her happiness demand the sacrifice."

"Hush! hush!" exclaimed Miss Elliot, painfully impressed by the strength of Isabel's language and the earnestness of her manner.

"The promise is made, dear aunt, in the presence of God, to you and to the dead," said Isabel, solemnly. She felt that a vow was upon her soul. It was a vow to be remembered long after, amid tears more bitter than any she had this day shed.

CHAPTER II.

"Hence, vain deluding joys,
The brood of folly, without father bred!
How little you bested,
Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys."

Milton.

"I AM always sorry, Matilda, to interfere in any way with your enjoyments, but you must feel the utter impropriety of a party in our house at present—so soon after my brother's death, and when we are expecting to receive his orphan daughter."

"It is because we expect your nieces so soon that I desire to have the party over at once; I should otherwise have been quite willing to wait a few weeks longer. As to your brother's death rendering it improper, I must say, Mr. Elliot, that I do not agree with you. If I had put on

mourning it would certainly; but, as you dispensed with my wearing that, I did not think it necessary to decline invitations, and of course that which did not prevent my accepting invitations cannot be pleaded as an excuse for my declining to return them."

Mr. Elliot looked annoyed, but turned to his newspaper, and sipped his chocolate in silence.

"How soon do you think your nieces can be here?" asked his wife.

"They were to sail on the twentieth. The average length of voyages from Savannah at this season is eight days."

"By the twenty-eighth then they will probably be here, and this is the seventeenth. Suppose I send out my invitations for Tuesday next, the twenty-second. It will require rapid work to get all my arrangements made by that time, but I would make any exertion rather than wound the feelings of poor Grace. I cannot disappoint those who have a right to expect a party from me, but I will have it over, and all signs of it cleared away, before the girls arrive. Will that do?" And Mrs. Elliot, who was never satisfied with herself when acting against her husband's expressed opinion, though her dissatisfaction seldom led her to sacrifice to his approval her pleasures or her popularity, asked this question with real anxiety, which was expressed both in her tone and manner. Mr. Elliot's face flushed for a moment, and he looked up, probably with the intention of expostulating again on the propriety of giving the party at all, but a glance at his wife's earnest countenance seemed to change his purpose, and he replied, "If the party must be given, it had certainly better be as early as that."

"Then I will set about writing my invitations at once;" and Mrs. Elliot sprang up and pushed her chair from the

table, but paused to ask, "Shall I give you another cup of chocolate?"

"No," said Mr. Elliot, with a sigh, as he too rose; and putting his paper in his pocket, went off to Wall-street, where, in the exciting game of buying and selling stocks, he was soon able to dismiss from his mind the annoyances of home.

Subjected to no restraint in his boyhood or early youth except that of his kind elder brother, William Elliot had lived till twenty-eight, solely for pleasure. That his pleasures were not of a degrading character was the result rather of the pure tastes fostered by the associations of his childhood than of any firmness of principle. At twenty-eight, during a summer passed in New York, he met, loved, wooed and won, a beauty and an heiress—Matilda Stuart. His wife had passed the first winter of their wedded life with him in Georgia, on an estate inherited from his father. Though gratified by the cordiality of her reception, and amused for a while by the novel aspect which life presented to her there, the informal hospitalities and simple pleasures of her new abode soon became insupportably tedious to one who had resided wholly in a city where society was regarded rather as a medium of display than as a source of enjoyment. Mrs. Elliot found little difficulty in persuading her husband to sell his property in Georgia to his brother, and to make his home in New York. For some months longer they continued to sport together through the flowery paths of life; but Mr. Elliot, at length, grew weary of soulless pleasures. His really affectionate heart pined for the dear delights of home—home such as he had known in his boyhood, where love smoothed the rugged path of duty and grew brighter for the smile with which she repaid his efforts. The birth of a son strengthened these yearnings of the heart. He had ascended almost to

the summit of the hill of life—he was now thirty—and he paused to look back upon his path. The retrospect did not please him, and he would gladly have surrounded his boy with influences adapted to cherish and unfold the higher qualities of his nature, to mould him into something nobler than a lover of pleasure or leader of *ton*. But he sought in vain for sympathy in these views from his brilliant and pleasing, but unthinking wife. Gradually, these opposing feelings led them into different paths. Mr. Elliot found in mercantile life sources of greater interest than the chase of the ephemera which had ceased to please him, and Mrs. Elliot continued to dazzle her acquaintances by the splendor of her furniture, her equipage and her jewels. She really loved her kind and indulgent husband, and always intended at some future time to live more in accordance with his tastes, but, at the period of her introduction to the reader, that time was still the future. For a long time she excused her tardy compliance with Mr. Elliot's wishes, or rather her postponement of them, by the necessity of keeping up her acquaintance with the gay world for her son's sake. "A few years hence," she was accustomed to say, "and Marion will want an introduction to life. His father has become such a hermit that he must be indebted to me for this, and having given it, I shall myself retire from the scene." Yet Marion had already been introduced to life, and though only twenty-two, needed, in his own opinion, no pilot through its devious ways, and still his mother continued his companion there.

Perhaps somewhat of his mother's love of display, united to his father's demand for deeper and more abiding objects of interest, had directed Marion Elliot's taste to military life, though he himself referred that taste solely to the influence of his older cousin, Walter Stuart. Whatever may have been the cause, his predilection was so decided

that it overbore the feeble opposition offered to it by his doting parents, and having been educated at West Point, he was now a lieutenant in the army. His first service in this character had been in a distant frontier fort to which he had been ordered at his own solicitation—solicitation made with his father's perfect approval, Mr. Elliot considering the *désagrémens* of such a position as more than counterbalanced by its securing for his son an association with his cousin, Captain Stuart, who had been stationed at this fort for several years. Both Captain Stuart and Lieutenant Elliot had lately received orders, transferring them to a post nearer home, and Captain Stuart desiring to visit his long unseen mother before entering on his new command, they had solicited and obtained a three months' leave of absence, one month of which had already expired.

Far different had been the early experience of life allotted to these two cousins. While Marion Elliot had been cradled on roses and borne by prosperous breezes over an unruffled sea, Walter Stuart had been compelled to struggle with a man's cares in his early boyhood. He was scarcely fourteen when his father died, the victim of despondency occasioned by his failure in business. Destined to the army, for which his adventurous spirit peculiarly fitted him, Walter would now have relinquished his own cherished plans and sought a clerkship, that his salary might enable him immediately to aid his mother in providing for the two young brothers and the almost infant sister, for whose support and education her slender means seemed wholly inadequate, but Mrs. Stuart was too generous and loved her son too truly to permit him to make what she knew would be so painful a sacrifice. She bent all her efforts to the completion of his education, and with the assistance of Mr. Elliot and such friends as she could influence, young Walter was entered at West Point before

he was fifteen. It was a noble sight—that young boy checking his own quick impulses and resisting alike the solicitations and the jeers of his companions, that by denying himself the pleasures dear to his age, he might save from his little allowance something for his mother; and that, by unceasing study, he might hasten the time when he could yet more largely contribute to her comfort. Such struggles with fortune had given him even then a gravity beyond his years, and now at twenty-five, there were few men of twice his age who looked on life with a calmer eye, or brought to its encounter a more resolved and steadfast spirit. He loved Marion Elliot, for he knew him to be brave and true, and Marion repaid his love with enthusiasm, though his light, careless nature, stood more in awe of the rebuke which he sometimes read on his cousin's stern brow than of any other earthly penalty.

The five days immediately succeeding the conversation with which this chapter opens, were passed by Mrs. Elliot in all the bustle of hurried preparation for the party on which she had decided. She did not hurry in vain. If her rooms had been in disorder, and her servants out of temper—if her husband had been obliged to dine at a restaurateur's, and she had herself gone nightly to bed almost too weary to sleep, during all this time, she was rewarded when, on the evening of the fifth day, leaning on the arm of her handsome and gay-hearted son, she passed through her suite of rooms and saw by the brilliant gas-lights the elegance of their decorations and the exquisite taste of their whole arrangement.

"I certainly have seen nothing so beautiful this season. Contoit has surpassed himself," she said, as she turned from the supper-table. "I wish your father would come in at once and receive the company with me," she added, as a shade stole over her still smooth, fair brow.

"He has promised to come in, later in the evening, for a little while; even that will be a painful effort to him, I fear, so you must be satisfied with it, *mia bella madre*," replied Marion, as he proudly led his mother forward to the room in which she was to receive her guests.

And soon other lovely forms came gliding in. Fair and beautiful was all that met the eye, harmonious and agreeable all that fell on the ear. But to some spirit-seer how changed would have been the aspect and tone of all! To him, the golden tissue, the silken robe, and the sparkling jewels, would have been often as the velvet pall with which in our pride we cover our dead, for, beneath them, he would have seen the already unfolding germ of death. Through the gay smile wreathing the bright young lip there would have been apparent to him the bitterness of disappointed hope and crushed affection; while in the sportive word, the light laugh, and festive song, his ear would have detected an under and deeper tone of sneering envy, taunting malice, and withering scorn. But there were no spirit-seers at Mrs. Elliot's, and the satisfaction that sat on every brow, and the compliments that flowed from every lip, gratified her utmost expectations.

The gayety was at its height, and the mantel clock had just given that one silvery stroke which announced the half hour after ten, when a carriage drove to Mr. Elliot's door laden with trunks and packages. The coachman opened the door, and an elderly gentleman descended from it. "Are you sure this is the house, coachman?" he asked, as he gazed in surprise on the illuminated windows.

"Look for yourself, sir; isn't that —— street, and this here Broadway; and didn't you tell me it was the corner you wanted?"

"Well! well! ring the bell and take off the baggage,"

said the gentleman, as he handed out two ladies in deep mourning.

They advanced towards the door, and finding it open, entered. Grace was pale and agitated well nigh to fainting by the idea of meeting strangers, and strangers whose very sympathy would recall all her sorrow. She leaned on Isabel, who, scarce more composed, yet exerted her failing strength and spirits to support her. Thus absorbed in their own emotions, they scarcely noticed whither they were following their conductor, until, with a sudden recoil, he exclaimed, "There must be some mistake; this cannot be the house."

At the same time a loud burst of music startled them, and looking up, they found themselves at the door of a room brilliantly lighted and filled with gayly dressed ladies and gentlemen, some of whom were at that moment taking their places for cotillions. Just beside them, leaning against the open door, was a gentleman of graceful and commanding form. Turning at the exclamation of their companion, he revealed a face full of a composed gravity that seemed almost as little in keeping with the scene as the mourning garments on which he gazed with such astonishment. Isabel Douglass, with quicker perception than one of her companions, and more calmness than the other, had already suspected somewhat of the truth, and the indignation she felt at what appeared to her almost an insult to the dead, had restored the color to her cheek, and given to her form its usual dignified carriage. Grace, on the contrary, was clinging to her, yet shrinking back as she cried, "Oh! let us go from here; this is not my uncle's."

Through the crape veil that floated around her, her golden hair gleamed brightly, as it fell in its own natural ringlets over her neck and shoulders, while its glitter

contrasted strangely with a face from whose beautiful and delicate features every tinge of color seemed to have departed. The gentleman was Walter Stuart, and he had needed but an instant to unravel the mystery of the scene. Scarcely had they observed him, when, stepping forward, he exclaimed, "Miss Elliot and Miss Douglass, I am sure; permit me, ladies, to lead you to your uncle—he is not here."

Before his offer could be accepted, before he had even ceased to speak, another voice from the hall in which they stood, was heard crying, "My dear children! come with me." Grace started, turned quickly around, and fell fainting into the arms of Mr. Elliot, whose voice was so singularly like his brother's, that her already failing senses were unable to bear the surprise of hearing again tones which she had believed life could never restore to her. He lifted her light form to his bosom, and saying to Isabel, "Come with us, my child," he led the way to a distant room in which he had spent the evening, alone. Isabel paused for a moment to look for the gentleman who had accompanied them, but satisfied that they were with the friends to whose protection he had promised to commit them, he had already disappeared, and she followed her uncle. Having laid Grace upon a sofa, Mr. Elliot turned to Isabel. Something like shame burned in his usually pale cheek as he met her eye, but he drew her to his bosom, and kissing her tenderly, said, with a faint smile, "I grieve to receive you thus; but we must not expect others to feel just as we do."

Grace had not yet begun to evince any return of consciousness, when the door opened and Captain Stuart entered with a lady in mourning, of plain features, but singularly pleasing countenance, leaning on his arm.

"I thought my mother might be of some service to

you," he said to Mr. Elliot, and then withdrew from the sofa around which the rest were gathered, though he could not avert his eyes from the fair young face and girlish form which lay there, all unconscious of his gaze.

"Stay, my dear," exclaimed Mrs. Stuart to Isabel, who had just procured a glass of water, and dipping her trembling fingers into it, was about to sprinkle it in her cousin's face; "I think we had better take advantage of Miss Elliot's insensibility, to remove her beyond the sound of festivities which will doubtless be painful to her. What say you, Mr. Elliot? Walter has detained the carriage that brought your nieces, and in a few minutes we can be at my house."

"I cannot leave Grace," said Isabel, decidedly.

"I hope you will not; I shall be happy to have you both with me," and Mrs. Stuart smiled so kindly upon Isabel, that the ice gathering around her heart was thawed, and she bent over Grace to hide the tears that streamed from her eyes. At this moment there was a louder burst of music, and she exclaimed, "Pray, uncle, let us go; those sounds will kill Grace."

"Let me take her to the carriage," said Captain Stuart, coming forward, and before any one could object, he had lifted the now half-conscious Grace from the sofa and borne her out. Mr. Elliot hastening before him, ordered a servant to shut the doors they were to pass, and Mrs. Stuart and Isabel quickly followed. Entering the carriage first, Mrs. Stuart received Grace from her son, and Isabel, as she took her seat beside her, clasped her cousin's hand and said, soothingly, "Do not be frightened, Grace, I am with you."

"Did my uncle carry me just now?" questioned Grace, faintly.

"Our uncle is here," answered Isabel, evasively, as

Mr. Elliot placed himself opposite to her in the carriage.

Captain Stuart mounted the box with the driver, and the horses were instantly in rapid motion. The carriage left Broadway for a more dimly lighted and narrower street, and rolling rapidly onwards, stopped in a few minutes before a small two-story house. The street was dark, but there shone a cheerful light from the windows, screened only by white muslin shades. Captain Stuart sprang to the ground, and opening the door of the house with his private key, returned to the carriage to offer his services again in carrying Grace, but Mr. Elliot had already taken her in his arms. Isabel moved on at her cousin's side as if loth to leave her for a moment. On entering the house, Mr. Elliot would have turned into the parlor, but Mrs. Stuart led the way up-stairs, saying, "This way, Mr. Elliot; I knew your nieces must want rest, and before I went to them I sent my servant home to see that a room was prepared for them. We had better take Miss Elliot there at once."

The motion of the carriage and the fresh air had completely revived Grace. She had heard the few tender words addressed to her by her uncle as he bore her from the carriage to her bed, and those words, spoken in a voice that seemed to give her back half the joy of which death had robbed her, had repaid her for all the trials of the evening. Her gentle heart asked only love to make her happy, and as Mr. Elliot laid her on her bed and pressed his lips tenderly to her forehead, she whispered, "You will be my father now, dear uncle!"

"Yes, my love, yours and Isabel's," and with a kind smile, Mr. Elliot turned to Isabel and held out his hand. She received it gently but calmly—coldly perhaps Mr. Elliot thought, as he contrasted her manner with the ten-

der glance that met his eye whenever he turned to Grace, and the fond clasp in which she held his other hand.

"I think you had better bid your daughters good night for the present, Mr. Elliot," said Mrs. Stuart playfully, "for they must be very weary. To-morrow morning, if you can breakfast for once so early as eight o'clock, come and take your chocolate with us.

"Good night, dear child," said Mr. Elliot, as he bent over Grace.

"*My* child, say *my* child, uncle."

"My child, my dear child," and Mr. Elliot kissed her with real affection; "and good night, my Isabel—my other daughter."

Isabel offered her hand to her uncle with a pleased though quiet smile, but Mr. Elliot touched her cheek with his lips, and then passing quickly from the room, joined Captain Stuart in the parlor below.

"I hope your niece is better," said that gentleman, with unusual animation of manner.

"Yes, she seems quite recovered; she is a sweet, lovely child."

"Very lovely."

"And Isabel is handsome too; though not so beautiful as Grace, or so engaging in her manners—but I am very weary; will you walk? You take a bed, I believe, at our house to-night."

Captain Stuart assented, and silence and darkness soon reigned throughout Mrs. Stuart's well-ordered house.

CHAPTER III.

"She is all simplicity,
A creature soft and mild;
Though on the eve of womanhood,
In heart a very child."

Mrs. Welby.

"Sacred and sweet is all I see in her."

Shakspeare.

THE next morning, aroused by the unusual noises of the street, Isabel awoke at early dawn, while the wearied Grace continued long after in tranquil slumber. Their present position had awakened a new feeling in Isabel's heart towards her cousin, a feeling allied to a mother's watchful and guarding tenderness. She must be as the soft dew and the cheering sunbeam to this delicate plant removed from its native and congenial soil. Now, as she gazed on the soft, childish loveliness of Grace, life's best influences were stirring within her, producing a new development of that beautiful, womanly nature which goes forth with deeper tenderness towards the helpless and dependent, which beams in the daughter's eyes as she supports the feeble steps of her aged parent, and swells in the mother's heart as she bends above her sleeping infant. Such feelings are allied to prayer, and stealing softly from the side of Grace, Isabel knelt, and in fervent though voiceless supplication commended all her objects of interest to the guardian care of her Father in heaven.

Mrs. Stuart found her young guests prepared to accompany her to the breakfasting room at eight o'clock, when she called for them. They had scarcely entered it when

Mr. Elliot and Captain Stuart arrived. Grace seemed even more lovely this morning to the gentlemen than they had last night pronounced her, yet she did not engross all their interest or admiration. Isabel's intellectual face, with its pale, but clear complexion, its dark gray, thoughtful eyes and high forehead, from which the glossy, black hair, parted in the midst, was put smoothly back behind the small and well-formed ear, was felt to be singularly interesting, and when lit up by her smile of welcome they were ready to declare it beautiful.

"You are like your dear mother, Isabel," said Mr. Elliot, and as if the likeness had been a new bond upon his love, he drew her again to his side and kissed her. No one who had marked the color that rushed to Isabel's cheek, and the glad beam that flashed from her eyes at this, could have doubted her sensibility, though, with these involuntary demonstrations, her expression of feeling terminated, while Grace continued to clasp her uncle's hand, seated herself beside him at table, and won his constant attention with the pleading, clinging tenderness of a petted child.

The little party was still lingering over the table, when the door of the breakfasting room was thrown open, and a lady in the prime of her life and her beauty appeared at it. Her form had lost, it is true, somewhat of its youthful lightness, inclining slightly to embonpoint, but it was still beautiful in its rounded symmetry and graceful in every attitude and movement. Her complexion was of a delicate, creamy tint, her dark eyes were soft, yet arch, and her pale chesnut hair showed no trace of time's advances. A white morning dress, coming close up to the beautiful throat, over which was thrown a shawl of India muslin, a cottage bonnet of straw, and the prettiest of French morning caps, formed her simple, yet elegant costume.

"Matilda!" and "Mrs. Elliot!" were the exclamations which revealed to the young strangers the name of their visiter. They rose to receive her, and advancing at once to them, she put an arm around each, and kissing them, called them, "Dear girls!"

"But which is Isabel and which is Grace?" she asked, after a moment's smiling survey of them.

They were pointed out to her, and again she kissed them, saying, "Your uncle did not let me know he was coming this morning. He hoped to secure your whole hearts before I could see you, but you will give me a share in them, will you not?"

She had already obtained what she asked. It was impossible to resist the graceful fascination of her manner. Already the party which had so shocked them last evening was forgotten, or, if remembered, only remembered to be excused. It was not till Mrs. Elliot had seated herself at table, that Isabel and Grace found she had been accompanied by a young gentleman, whom Mr. Elliot introduced to them as their cousin Marion.

"Were I not so delighted to see you, I should almost quarrel with you for coming quite so soon; I had such pretty fancies about your rooms, and now you must go into them just as they are," said Mrs. Elliot.

"Your fancies can now be executed under the supervision of my cousins' taste," interposed Marion Elliot.

"And so divested of all their enchantment, by being seen when incomplete."

"I can make a better arrangement than that," said Mrs. Stuart; "leave the young ladies with me, till you are quite ready for their reception."

"You do not dream what you are asking. I shall live with them wherever they are," exclaimed Mrs. Elliot.

"And I too," said Mr. Elliot.

"And for me—I must live with my papa and mamma," cried Marion, with comic gravity.

"Agreed," replied Mrs. Stuart, "provided you promise not to require of me lodgings at night."

And so between jest and earnest it was concluded that Isabel and Grace should remain with Mrs. Stuart for a week, during which time Mrs. Elliot hoped to complete her plans for their comfort and enjoyment in their new home.

They were very happy at Mrs. Stuart's. There was something very winning and home-like in her watchful and almost maternal kindness, and Captain Stuart brought forth for their amusement, his books, his engravings, and the rich stores of his own mind—a mind which had gathered its treasures from the associations of active life, even more than from books. The cousins were enchanted by his vivid portraitures of the wild border life, in the midst of which he had passed so many years. It was rarely that he mentioned himself, but sometimes when a striking achievement caused Isabel to ask, "Who did that? Who led that detachment?" he would laughingly confess himself the hero of his own story, though more frequently she was left to suspect it from his evasive reply. To Marion Elliot's pride in his friend they were indebted for sketches, which Captain Stuart was too reserved to have given of his own accord; but the quick frown, and the "Nay, nay, Marion, that will not interest your cousins," with which his promptings were at first received, were laid aside as Captain Stuart saw the rapt attention with which they hung upon his words. Sometimes, during these narrations, his stern brow grew sterner, and his deep-set gray eye kindled and flashed, till Grace gazed on him with something akin to terror, yet terror in which there was a charm.

A few days before the removal of Isabel and Grace to their uncle's house, Mrs. Elliot came in the morning to talk over a party to which she had been the previous evening, or rather a French Marquis to whom the party had been given, and who had seemed to her, as well as to many others there, the only object worthy attention.

"I must invite him to our house," she said. "By-the-by, Isabel, I hope you and Grace speak French, for when Marion is gone again, I shall want you to interpret for me."

"You would not find us very good interpreters, I fear; we have not been accustomed to speak French, though we read and write it."

"Read and write it! that will be of no use to you, that I can see; you must practise speaking. Walter," she exclaimed to Captain Stuart, who at that moment entered the room, "Mr. Manesca says you speak French like a native; pray spend an hour in French conversation with these young ladies every day while you are here. Will you?"

"Certainly; it will give me pleasure, if you and they desire it."

He looked at his intended pupils as if for some response, and Isabel said, "I fear, aunt, that would be troubling Captain Stuart too much—"

"I said it would give me pleasure, Miss Douglass," interrupted Captain Stuart, fixing his eyes smilingly upon her.

"And Walter never pays a compliment, but says exactly what he means, and neither more nor less; so I shall depend on him for your improvement, instead of giving you a master, who will bind you down to certain hours, when I want you to be free as air."

Mrs. Elliot rose soon after to return home, and Walter Stuart accompanied her.

"What say you to these French conversations, Grace?" asked Isabel.

"That they will be awkward at first, but Captain Stuart is very good; at any rate, I shall try them, and so I should if they were twice as disagreeable, for I do love Aunt Elliot, and I never can refuse to do any thing that one I love wishes."

Mrs. Stuart had been but a short time in the room, and had heard only the latter part of this sentence. Her kind heart was already deeply interested for these orphan girls, and she said, looking affectionately at Grace, "Pardon me, my dear child, if I am taking too great a liberty with you; but I must tell you, that that seems to me a very dangerous sentiment."

"What, Mrs. Stuart?"

"That you cannot refuse to do any thing desired by one you love."

"But I only love good people, you see, Mrs. Stuart; I never mean to love the bad, and as the good can only want me to do good, I shall escape all the danger; shall I not?" asked Grace, playfully, as she seated herself on a foot-stool at Mrs. Stuart's feet, and looked up to her confidingly.

"You forget, my dear child, that there are none good—no, not one. The best are liable to err, and far indeed is he likely to stray from the right, who makes the fallible judgment of man his guide, instead of the perfect law of God."

Grace cast down her eyes, and Mrs. Stuart, laying her hand gently on her head, added, "You think me very grave, I doubt not, but I cannot help being so, for I have known women make such shipwreck of happiness, of reputation, and even of conscience on this principle, that I regard it as one of the most dangerous shoals to be encoun-

tered in our voyage through life,—especially to a nature, gentle and loving, like yours."

Grace continued silent, and Mrs. Stuart said, "You are not displeased, I hope, with an old woman's freedom?"

"Displeased! oh, no!"

"Then I will ask you, my dear child, henceforward, in every doubtful case of conduct, to inquire, not what this or that person thinks or wishes, but what God commands—what the still, small voice of conscience counsels."

"But it will not be wrong to speak French with Captain Stuart, as Aunt Elliot wishes us to do; will it?"

"Certainly not; it was not to the thing you intended doing, for of that I had not heard, but to the principle you expressed that I objected."

The next day the French conversations commenced, and thus Captain Stuart was brought into yet more intimate relations with Isabel and Grace. It will be thought, perhaps, that such an association could not greatly excite his interest, but, in truth, he found an almost irresistible attraction in the childlike Grace. He had lived for years among men—strong, brave, fierce men—separated from the refining and softening influence of woman, until the desire for that influence had become the passion of his soul, and the very exaggeration of the distinctive characteristics of her sex in Grace—the sensitiveness, the dependence, even the exactingness of her nature, made her more charming in his eyes. It was, of course, but the attraction of a lovely child, for, at not quite sixteen, Grace must have seemed such to the man of twenty-five, yet the deep, decided tone of one accustomed to command, grew gentle when addressed to her, and if he saw her agitated or disturbed, he could scarce resist the desire to draw her to his bosom and win her confidence, and sooth her sorrow, as he would have done that of a favorite sister.

The French conversations proved as advantageous as Mrs. Elliot could have expected to her nieces, and when the Marquis de Villeneuve presented himself at her house, she was at no loss for interpreters.

"You have lost a capital scene by not coming sooner," said Marion Elliot one day to Walter Stuart, as he entered the parlor in which he was seated with his mother and cousins.

"What was it?" asked Walter Stuart carelessly, anticipating some amusing blunder on the part of the Marquis de Villeneuve, whom he had passed in the hall.

"Why, De Villeneuve has taken it into his wise head to admire our little Grace prodigiously—"

"Cousin Marion!" cried the blushing Grace.

"And my mother here," laying his hand affectionately on hers, "who is, as you know, the most inveterate of match-makers—"

"Marion!" remonstrated Mrs. Elliot.

"And who longs to place herself above all her compeers by bringing a French Marquis to the feet of her *protégée*, would let nobody interpret for her this morning but Grace, intending thereby to show off her accomplishments, while poor Grace blushed, stammered, and blundered, doing little credit to your teaching—but never mind, Grace, you will soon learn better from De Villeneuve."

Marion's scene did not seem so capital as he had imagined it would in the eyes of Captain Stuart. There was something almost sad in the look with which he regarded Grace. She met it, and was embarrassed by its intensity of expression.

A few days after, Captain Stuart sent a handsomely bound copy of "Manesca's French Course," to each of his "pupils," as he was accustomed playfully to call Isabel and Grace. The next time he called at Mr. Elliot's he

found Grace in the parlor alone. She was writing when he entered, but dropped her pen on perceiving who the visiter was, and thanked him for his present.

"I hoped it would remind you not unpleasantly of your quondam teacher when he should be gone, as he soon must be," said Captain Stuart.

"And are you then going very soon?" asked Grace.

"In little more than a week."

"For how long?"

"I know not exactly, but so long probably that you will have quite time enough to forget me before I return."

"I never forget my friends," said Grace, earnestly yet modestly.

"And will you permit me to consider myself as your friend, to speak to you as a friend, as I would do to my own little sister."

"Certainly," replied Grace, gratified, yet abashed by his earnestness, as he leaned forward on the table between them, and fixed his calm, grave eyes upon her face.

After a moment's thoughtful pause, he said, "Your friends here love you very dearly. They seem unwilling to abridge your present pleasures even for your own future good; but this is such valuable time to you that I have felt an almost irresistible desire to urge you to make use of it in preparing yourself more fully for the life on which you are soon to enter. Once launched on the current of the society to which Mrs. Elliot will introduce you, and you will have no time for such sober employments as reading or study; now you can have the best masters, if you desire it; many young ladies at your age are at school—"

"Isabel and I were taught altogether at home; we never went to school," interrupted Grace, deprecatingly.

"And you would not like to begin now," said Captain

Stuart with a smile; "well, there is no necessity that you should, for your reading together may be made as improving to you as any school, if you read with any system; you should have a course marked out for you by some friend."

"Will you do it?" asked Grace.

"Will you permit me to do it, and will you promise me to read regularly, say two hours every day, with your cousin, and not let Marion's thoughtless jests, or even the Marquis de Villeneuve's flatteries tempt you from your preparation for the graver duties of life."

In his earnestness he laid his hand almost unconsciously on that of Grace, which rested on the paper before her, and at this moment Mrs. Elliot and Isabel entered the parlor. There was something very significant in Mrs. Elliot's smile, as her eyes fell on the hands thus clasped. The color may have deepened in Captain Stuart's face, but it was with no emotion of shame, and if Mrs. Elliot had suspected him of any feeling which he would have hesitated to avow, she was undeceived when, holding out his other hand to Isabel, he exclaimed, "You have just come at the right moment, Miss Douglass. I have been reminding your cousin, that two years, at least, must pass before she will be called on for the onerous labors of a belle, and advising her to spend some part of that time in preparing for graver duties, and she promises me, or, to speak more properly, was about to promise me to pursue a course of reading which I shall mark out for her, devoting to it not less than two hours every day—"

"Stay, stay, most unreasonable of men!" cried Mrs. Elliot. "Two hours for reading, and then music—"

"And Italian, and Spanish, and German," cried Isabel, while both she and Grace laughed at their aunt's look of dismay.

"Yes, Italian, and Spanish, and German," said Capt. Stuart, smiling gayly; "and lectures in the evening whenever you can command a good course on chemistry, geology, or any of the natural sciences."

"And pray, what time are they to have for visiting, or amusement?" questioned Mrs. Elliot.

"Oh! this course will only extend over two years, and then I give them up to your tender mercies."

"Poor things! They will be entirely spoiled for the world as it is, before that time."

"Then we may hope that they will aid in making the world as it should be."

"What! reformers as well as blues! Come here, Marion," she called to her son, who at that instant passed the door of the parlor, "come here, and help me to save these poor girls from being made something between *femmes savans* and field-preachers."

"It is too late, aunt; we promise—we promise," cried both Isabel and Grace.

"Victory! Victory!" shouted Captain Stuart.

"Boast not too soon, brave sir; promise is not performance."

"With the true—and I am sure these young ladies belong to that class—they cannot be separated."

"We shall see," said Mrs. Elliot.

In less than a fortnight after this scene, Captain Stuart and Lieut. Elliot were again on their way to join the army, but, before they went, the former had marked out a course of reading for the cousins, had procured the books for them which they needed, and with Mr. Elliot's consent, had engaged an excellent Italian master to attend them.

CHAPTER IV.

"Love Virtue: she alone is free,
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her."

Comus.

Time glided rapidly away, rapidly to Mrs. Elliot, who had found new reason for her favorite indulgences, in the necessity of keeping up her circle of acquaintance for the sake of Isabel and Grace; and not less rapidly to Isabel and Grace themselves. The course of study recommended by Captain Stuart was pursued with equal avidity by both the cousins, while messages occasionally transmitted through his mother to his "pupils," as he still styled them, or through Mrs. Elliot in her correspondence with Marion to him, kept alive in the minds of both their past associations.

As the characters of Isabel and Grace developed themselves, a nice observer would have marked, in many things, the effect of the different influences under which their first impressions had been received. Grace continued to act in accordance with the principle whose dangerous tendency Mrs. Stuart had endeavored to unveil to her. She was, in consequence, what the objects of her affection —we had almost said, what the associate of the hour— made her. Amiable and lovely, she sought only to please, and she rarely failed to attain her object. Her studies were pursued, that Captain Stuart might, on his return,

know how well she had kept her promise to him ;—Captain Stuart, who was so kind, and whose talent, decision, and high moral qualities, as reported by Marion, commanded such admiration from her, that he had become the representative of her ideal, the model with whom to compare, and by whom to judge of others. Listening with gentle acquiescence to Mrs. Stuart's rational reflections, full of all sweet, domestic affections when nestling at her uncle's side, she was with Mrs. Elliot the gayest flutterer in her morning drive or evening assembly. Grace had not forgotten the teachings of her childhood. There was no family altar erected in Mr. Elliot's house, but the cousins failed not, morning and evening, to bow themselves before the God of their fathers ; and often when Grace heard, at church, some tune linked with the memory of early days, or some hymn whose words she had last caught from the lips of her buried father or her absent aunt, the sudden rush of almost forgotten feelings, the sudden awakening of long dormant sympathies would cause her heart to throb, and her eyes to fill, with emotions which seemed perhaps to herself as well as to many spectators, to have their source in a religious sentiment; but there was no religious principle actuating her life. While all smiled on her, and caressed her, her heaven was attained, and full of the present, in a refined yet luxurious self-indulgence, she sported joyously along her sunny path without a thought of whither it led.

To Isabel, life was a thing of graver and deeper import. Accustomed in childhood to yield her gratification to that of her more delicate cousin, she had been early taught that self-indulgence was not her ultimate good. Even the praise for such early mastery, which might have seemed to some its legitimate reward, was sparingly bestowed; but a more valuable possession was given her in the just princi-

ples implanted in her mind, and in the constant reference which she was taught to make to the approval of the Holy, and to those spiritual rewards which accompany that approval. Even now, Isabel was in no danger of making her own present pleasure the object of her life; for though no distinction was made in her uncle's house between Grace and herself, she remembered her vow, and in obedience to it many a coveted pleasure was silently foregone, many a cherished plan relinquished for what she discovered to be the desire of Grace, till what had originated in the enthusiasm of grateful affection became her undeviating habit, and extended its influence to her daily and hourly manifestations of character. Never contending with Grace for the admiration she valued or the caresses she loved, Isabel's manners became quiet, undemonstrative, some said cold.

Mrs. Elliot was often impatient with the studies which kept her nieces from her side, when their attractions would have added brilliancy to her own.

"Books—books, forever!" she exclaimed one day, as she peeped into a package that lay upon the table. "I wonder, Isabel, what you and Grace are studying for—law, medicine, or divinity. I can assure you, I do not think you will recommend yourself to lawyers, physicians, or divines, by rivalling them in their own sphere."

"These are German books," said Isabel with a smile.

"And what do you want with German?"

"To interpret for you," said Grace gayly, and laying her head caressingly on her aunt's shoulder, as she spoke—"to interpret for you, when a German baron comes to see you, that he may not be driven away, as the poor Marquis de Villeneuve was, by my blunders."

"Saucy girl!" Mrs. Elliot called her, but she kissed her too.

Mrs. Stuart was present at this scene, and one day when

Isabel was pleading her studies as a reason why she could not see her oftener, she said, "That was a very important question, which your aunt asked the other day, 'For what are you studying?' Have you ever asked it of yourself?"

"I have," said Isabel gravely.

"And what was your answer?"

"I could not obtain a very satisfactory one. I can hardly say it is to please my friends, for I do not know any of them who will be particularly pleased by my acquirements."

"Perhaps you are ambitious of the honors of a blue."

Isabel laughed as she said, "I have not been accustomed to hear that title treated with much honor at my uncle's."

"But we must have some motive for any long-continued course of action; does yours for this lie too deep for discovery?"

"I do not believe I have any motive, except the present pleasure I derive from my studies."

"And is that a sufficient motive for a rational being? An animal seeks the gratification of its instincts for the sake of present pleasure—surely reasoning man should have higher aims."

Isabel colored and looked down in silence.

"I do not offend you, I hope," said Mrs. Stuart in her peculiarly gentle, yet grave tones.

"Offend me! Oh no! I am silent from shame; for, I must speak the truth, I have never thought of this subject as I should. Pray, tell me, what should be my motive?"

"What is our most reasonable aim in all our actions?"

Isabel, after some thought, answered, "Our own happiness and the happiness of those around us."

"Nay, nay; is that so? Are we to set before us an aim so vague, so illusory? Believe me, my dear child, happiness is a wandering light, varying in form and in direction with our varying moods, and the shifting scenes of life, leading its pursuer hither and thither, till he sinks wearied and disappointed into the grave."

"And what then should we seek?"

"God."

Isabel almost started at hearing that solemn word in such a connection.

"I know," she said, after a moment's awed silence, "that He is the source of all good, and that we must seek His blessing before all things."

"That is true, for in that blessing we have all things; but you have been accustomed, probably, to consider all that relates to Him as something apart from our common life. God and the world have seemed to you necessarily opposed; and while you have been taught to reverence and love Him, and to look to Him for your reward in a future life, you have felt as if there were other objects to which your present existence must be at least in part devoted, other aims which must *now* divide your soul with Him. Is it not so?"

"I believe you are right; nor can I see how it is possible to connect Him with our common life, our daily actions: there seems irreverence in the thought."

"And yet all action must be informed by a living spirit of good or evil, which as a quickening germ will produce its like in our own souls and the souls of others; what else do we mean by the *influence* of our actions? The minutest and most common acts thus viewed become of importance, as advancing or impeding our approach to God—that is, to absolute goodness and holiness. By seeking God, I mean that we should seek to have His Spirit—the Spirit of all

goodness—dwelling in our hearts and inspiring our actions, —making us perfect as He is perfect—holy, just, and true as He is."

"But can we be thus perfect?"

"He Himself through the lips of His Divine Son has bidden us to aim at perfection, and it was of our aims I spoke. Do you not see, now, how it is possible, even in the most common acts of our lives, to seek God?"

"I understand your argument, and yet I should like to hear you apply it to our common life; to my studies, for instance; how can I seek God in them?"

"By recognising in your intellectual nature a gift of God, to be cultivated for Him, for the advancement of His rule—the rule of the true and the right—over your own soul and through the world."

"This I can see, but in our social life; it seems to me almost a profanity to speak of God as present there."

"If your impression be correct, then is our social life all evil, for where God is not, there is no good; but I think you will agree with me, after a little reflection, that there is no scene in which you enter, where you may not find means of cultivating in yourself, and exhibiting to others, humility, patience, charity, and all other pure, lovely, and generous qualities. Wherever this cannot be, it is wrong for you to be, for there you have necessarily withdrawn yourself from God, and the purest place, or the noblest pursuit which awakens in your spirit the opposite emotions, which becomes the occasion to you of vain-glory, or envy, or of any ungenerous and unlovely quality, is, to you, evil."

There was a long and thoughtful pause.

At length Mrs. Stuart asked, "Have I aided you in answering the question, For what are you studying?"

"You have at least taught me for what I ought to study,"

said Isabel, with an ingenuous blush; "for what I ought to live," she added, a moment after.

Nor did Isabel forget the lesson thus received, or refer to it only on rare and distant occasions. The principle it conveyed was adopted as the abiding principle of her life. Tried by its rigid requisitions, she found much that she had thitherto regarded as harmless at least, if not wholly right, on which she was obliged to pronounce the sentence EVIL; but there was a Divine Redeemer, and she sorrowed not as one without hope; and though, thereafter, the quick impulses of youth, or the counteracting influences surrounding her, sometimes led her from the course to which it pointed, she quickly turned to it again as to her guiding star, and felt safe only when its beams were on her path. And how transparent, and free, and joyous was her life while she walked in its light! It was light from heaven, and the cares and annoyances that shadow the brightest scenes of earth were dispelled by it; peace had its home within her heart, and serenity sat throned upon her brow.

Isabel loved Grace so truly, and confided in her so entirely, that her first desire was to communicate to her the peace and light that had dawned upon her own spirit. And Grace acquiesced in the truth presented to her, but it opened no avenue to heaven in her soul. She was a believer emphatically in *another* life, a life dissevered wholly from the present, a life for which our Sabbaths and our Bibles were given to prepare us, and to which belonged such thoughts as Isabel presented to her now; but to believe that we could here bring heaven into our souls, that we could adopt its principles, live its life, and find its enjoyments, was to her an unintelligible mystery. For this, her earthly life, there were earthly stimulants and earthly rewards, human love and human applause.

Different as were the sources of action in the two minds

thus unfolded to our readers, in the visible results there was often little perceptible variation. But there was harmony between Isabel's inner and outer being, and her life rose as a joyous anthem towards heaven, while that of Grace was as a medley, in which notes full of sweetness and grandeur were suddenly succeeded by light, comic absurdities, or harsh discords. She almost always felt with Isabel, yet often acted in accordance with her aunt's worldly maxims, or with the light caprice of some companion of the hour.

It was not yet thought necessary to make any difference in the expenditure of Isabel, with her fifteen or at most twenty thousand dollars of property, secured to her by the careful management during his life, and the generous bequest at his death of the late Mr. Elliot, and of Grace with her large estates, worth at least five times as much. They were each allowed a private purse of twelve dollars a month, to expend as their feelings or their fancies might lictate, while equally liberal arrangements were made for the claims created by their social position or their intellectual improvement.

"Oh, Grace! come and see poor Mrs. Brown," cried Isabel, one morning, rushing into the parlor in which Grace sat at the piano, practising her last lesson in music; "poor woman! she is in sad distress, almost all she owned was burned up in the fire last night."

The sympathies of Grace were quick and warm, and without a moment's delay, she followed Isabel to the room in which Mrs. Brown, their washerwoman, stood taking clean clothes from a basket, and laying them on the bed.

"Ah, ladies!" she exclaimed as they entered, "it was well for you that I had your clothes in the baskets, all ready to bring to you, or I never could have saved them; but the first thing I did, when I saw how near the fire was,

was to run over to Miss Green's with my baskets, and by the time I got back, every thing was in a blaze. I thank the Lord the children are all safe, and yet it's little I know how I am to feed or to clothe them. We did not save a second rag to our backs, and here am I—a poor lone woman, to begin the world again, and not even a shelter to cover us."

Mrs. Brown's voice was stifled by sobs, and Isabel and Grace stood by in powerless sorrow, not knowing what to do or say for her comfort. At length Isabel asked, "Where are you staying now, Mrs. Brown?"

"With a friend, ma'am, in Essex-street, that kindly let me and my children come in her room, till we could get another place; but I must find our victuals, and I was going to ask you, ladies, if you would be kind enough to pay me for this month's washing now."

"Certainly, certainly, Mrs. Brown," exclaimed both Grace and Isabel.

"I know it's two weeks before it's due, but it would be a great help."

"Oh! no matter when it is due, you shall have it now," and Grace hastened to her aunt, and having told Mrs. Brown's piteous story, returned with the money to her, and with many thanks the poor woman took her leave, comforted and strengthened even more by the sympathy she had excited than by this seasonable payment.

New to the trials of life, Isabel and Grace could not dismiss Mrs. Brown and her sad condition from their minds, at least without attempting to do something more for her relief than merely paying for her labors in advance.

"She said her poor children had no clothes," suggested Grace, "suppose we buy some flannel to make petticoats for them, the weather is getting quite cold, and some calico for frocks."

Isabel readily agreed to this proposal, and they examined their purses to ascertain how far their contents would go towards the gratification of their generous desires. Together, they had a little over fourteen dollars.

"Now, how shall we get the things? Who will buy them for us?" asked Isabel.

These were questions not easily answered. They had never walked out in New York alone, and they felt almost intuitively that Mrs. Elliot was not the best agent to be employed in the purchase of coarse flannel and calico for poor children. Before they had decided what should be done, they heard Mrs. Elliot's voice calling for them. They had promised to accompany her in her morning drive, and the carriage was ready.

The picture of Mrs. Brown and her scantily clothed children faded into indistinctness, as, seated in one of the most splendid carriages in the city, Isabel and Grace rolled leisurely through Broadway, looking out upon the gayly dressed and busy multitude that thronged its sidewalks, and upon its shop-windows draperied with the most costly and elegant articles of merchandise. The carriage drew up at a milliner's, and they entered her room, already crowded with the fair votaries of fashion, among whom lounged a few idle gentlemen.

"See here, young ladies!" said a young attendant to Grace and Isabel, "here are some beautiful second mourning cravats and ribands for the waist. Nothing in mourning was ever so elegant, just see how splendidly the cravats are embroidered, and the ribands match them exactly."

"Oh, they are beautiful!" cried one of their young acquaintances, who paused near, to examine the cravats, "if I were in mourning, I would have one directly."

"Put up a cravat and riband for me," said Grace.

"Ah! you are a fortunate girl," said the young lady

who had just spoken, "you can get whatever you want; now, I am dying for that blue and salmon cravat, and I cannot get it."

"I always like to deal with Miss Elliot, she never even asks the price of any thing," said the milliner's apprentice, already versed in the arts of flattery: "shall I put up a cravat and riband for you? I dare say I can find one exactly like this," she added, turning to Isabel with an insinuating air, which changed to an expression almost contemptuous, as she declined her offer.

"What do I owe you?" asked Grace, as she received the little package.

"Only two dollars."

Grace handed the money.

"*Only* two dollars!" cried the young lady who was dying for the blue and salmon cravat, "and I cannot coax mamma out of seven shillings for that cravat."

Grace lingered behind her, laid down the seven shillings, received the coveted prize and followed her with it, amidst exclamations of "How generous! I like to deal with such generous people," from the obsequious attendant.

Isabel was ashamed to feel the color rising in her cheek, as she caught a look which showed that this girl was contrasting the cousins in her mind. The color deepened, as she heard the voice of the young lady to whom Grace had presented the cravat, exclaiming, "Oh, Grace! this is too kind; just see, mamma, what a beautiful cravat Miss Elliot has given me, she is so generous!"

"Come here, Isabel," cried Mrs. Elliot, before she had time to recover her self-possession. "Here is a subscription paper for those poor people that were burnt out in—where did you say, Miss ——?"

"Havana."

"Oh, yes! Havana; how much shall I put down for

you? do not say more than you have in your purse, for you must pay at once, how much have you?"

"I—I am very sorry—"

"But how much are you sorry? as the Frenchman asked," persisted Mrs. Elliot gayly, rather pleased at the attention which the little dialogue had attracted from the ladies around, as she felt sure that her nieces would do her credit by their liberality.

"I want a *brown* riband," sounded near Isabel, and her failing resolution was nerved again, for Mrs. Brown with all her train of miseries was before her.

"I have nothing to give, aunt."

"Nothing to give! Why your purse does not seem by any means empty."

"But I must give this money for—for—"

"If it be for any thing you have purchased here, Miss —— shall charge it to me."

"No, no; it is for nothing I have bought, I only want—"

"Pray do not stammer and look so dreadfully confused. I will not force you to give any thing," said Mrs. Elliot coldly.

Isabel turned away with tears in her eyes, ashamed to meet the looks which she fancied bent on her, and anxious only to hide herself and her purse from every one.

"Here, Grace!" cried Mrs. Elliot, "have you any thing for these poor sufferers in Havana? Will you subscribe?"

"You do it for me, aunt."

"But how much shall I say? It must be no more than you have in your purse, for the money will be called for this afternoon."

"There's my purse, I do not know exactly how much there is in it."

Mrs. Elliot turned out the contents; there were five

dollars and a half. "There," said she, putting back the half, "I will not leave you penniless."

"Take it, aunt; I do not want it, I would rather give it to those poor people."

"Mrs. Brown," whispered Isabel.

"I can't help her now, for you see all my money is gone, and these poor people, I suppose, want it just as much; besides, it would have looked so mean to refuse."

Grace did not know that Isabel had refused.

Poor Isabel! she longed to shelter herself from observation in the carriage, and felt that it was indeed a difficult thing to prefer reality to appearance; *being* to *seeming* generous. She would gladly, as soon as they were in the carriage, have explained to Mrs. Elliot the cause of her apparent selfishness, but that lady's coldness of manner rendered it for some time quite impossible for her to address her freely. At length, Mrs. Elliot, who was not in the least of a sullen nature, said, "You really vexed me, Isabel, by appearing so miserly before all those people, refusing to give any thing, with a purse full of money in your hand."

"I had only six dollars, aunt."

"Only six dollars! Why Grace had only five and a half. Six dollars would have been a very handsome subscription from a young girl, even half of it would have done; but to give nothing! I never was so ashamed of any thing in my life."

"I had promised, Grace and I had promised—I mean we had determined to spend all our money this month for poor Mrs. Brown."

"For Mrs. Brown!"

"Yes, you know she has lost every thing, even her clothes and her children's, by the fire."

"And you are going to spend your money for her.

Foolish child! if I had known that, I would have made you give it where you would have got some credit for it. There will be people enough to help Mrs. Brown, and I dare say, she will soon be better off than ever."

"But, if we all send our money to Havana, who can help her?" asked Isabel, with a smile. She was happy that her aunt knew her motive, and thought her "foolish" rather than selfish. With the assistance and by the advice of Mrs. Stuart, her purchases were made for Mrs. Brown; and when she received the tearful thanks of the grateful mother, she was rewarded for her morning at the milliner's.

CHAPTER V.

"A man, whom storms can never make
Meanly complain, nor can a flattering gale
Make him talk proudly."

Dr. Watts.

While Isabel and Grace were in mourning, Mrs. Elliot did not urge their making their appearance with her at large parties or in public places, but the second year of their residence with her, when Isabel was nearly eighteen and Grace seventeen, she insisted, almost commanded, that they should lay aside the "habiliments of wo," and accompany her to all her gay resorts. They attracted attention and excited admiration wherever they appeared. From the boxes of the theatre, the promenade in Broadway, and even sometimes in that place consecrated to the worship of the Holiest, glasses were directed to the faces of the "Southern Heiresses," for such report had an-

nounced them to be. There was something piquant in the very contrast of the tall, graceful Isabel, with her dark, earnest eyes and intellectual brow, and the light, not less graceful and more sparkling Grace, to whom her golden hair, falling in curls over her neck and shoulders—it was a style which Mrs. Elliot thought becoming to her—clear, laughing blue eyes, and a manner unrestrained in its gayety or its caressing tenderness, gave somewhat of childhood's unconscious charm.

Even the sober mind of Isabel was at first not wholly proof against these flatteries, although, in moments of retirement, she heard "a still, small voice," rebuking the rising sensations of gratified vanity as unworthy of her nobler nature. But a few weeks' experience of the unvarying round of labored pleasure, in which she was led by her aunt, was sufficient to satiate her, for she found there nothing to elevate, nothing to meet the requisitions of a mind and heart that had learned to look heavenward for its hopes and its rewards. Yet Isabel's nature was in no degree cold or unsocial, and even when she began to turn a wishful eye from the brilliant saloons in which her evening and much of her night was often passed, to a quiet corner of her uncle's study or a seat at Mrs. Stuart's fireside, one glance at Grace, her face radiant with pleasure, her movements joyous and airy as those of some spirit of mirth, was sufficient to recall her truant thoughts and awaken her to some enjoyment of the passing scene. In the constant engagements of this life of gayety, there was little time for the more quiet intercourse of friendship. Mrs. Stuart missed the pleasant, social visits of the young girls, who had become objects of tender interest to her, and one of whom—Isabel—her heart had adopted in the place of the daughter whom death had early snatched from her arms.

The spring was far advanced towards summer, and the warmth of the weather had already caused some interruption to the winter's gayeties, when Mrs. Stuart called one morning to invite the cousins and Mr. and Mrs. Elliot to spend the evening with her. Mrs. Elliot and her nieces were engaged.

"Can you not make an excuse for me, and let me go to Mrs. Stuart?" asked Isabel diffidently.

"How can that be? You know—" commenced Mrs. Elliot, but Grace had already exclaimed, "You will not leave me, *mia Bella*, you know I cannot sing without you, and this is to be a musical *soirée* at Mrs. Fenton's," and Isabel smiled in the sweet face uplifted to hers, and almost without a sigh, yielded her own wishes.

"But can we not make a compromise?" asked Mrs. Stuart. "Your evening, I suspect, does not begin till mine has nearly ended. At what hour do you go to your engagement?"

"At nine."

"Then, Isabel, if you can come to me at six, and remain till your aunt calls for you, it will give me great pleasure; as for you, Grace, you have no taste for the society of a plain old woman."

"Oh! do not say so, dear Mrs. Stuart. You know I love you, and love to be with you," and Grace threw her arms around Mrs. Stuart's neck and nestled closely to her side, "but I love so many, and it is impossible to be with them all, you know; I will come and spend a long day with you soon."

"I must not hope for you this evening, I see; but, Isabel—"

"I will come certainly; by six o'clock, you say?"

"Yes; and ask your uncle to come with you; I am to have a friend of Walter, from Virginia, with me, whom I

should be glad to introduce to him; lest he too should be engaged, however, I will send Arthur for you, so pray be ready at six."

"I will."

Mr. Elliot could not go to Mrs. Stuart's at six, but he promised to call at a later hour; and Isabel, dressed for the musical *soirée*, at which her evening was to be concluded, accompanied Arthur Stuart, who was punctual to the appointed hour.

Isabel's style of dress was always simple, and now the muslin dress and the single snowy flower with leaves of vivid green which lay upon the glossy braids of her dark hair, seemed scarcely unsuited to a quiet evening at Mrs. Stuart's, though sufficiently elegant for a more fashionable assemblage. The gentleman mentioned by Mrs. Stuart was already with her when Isabel entered, and she introduced him as Mr. Falconer, of Virginia.

Mr. Falconer was visiting a more northern climate than that of his own home with the hope of regaining his usual vigorous health, which had lately been impaired "by a severe cold," he said; but, as Captain Stuart had written his mother, by spending a night in water to the waist while he was making the most exhausting exertions to save the lives and property of some poor people from destruction by a sudden rise in a river during a gale of wind. His residence in Virginia was but a few miles distant from the military post at which Captain Stuart had been stationed for the last two years. They had been thus brought into each other's society, and similarity of sentiment and character had created a warm friendship between them.

There was in this gentleman's high and broad forehead, and clear, commanding eye, the indisputable stamp of power. His closely curling brown hair grew up in

points at the temples, leaving that part of the forehead with its full, spiral veins, quite exposed to view. He would scarcely have been called handsome, yet if beauty consist in the expression of a noble spirit, never face possessed it more than his. He was tall; and there was that in his form and movements which would have proclaimed him gentleman, though he had been clad in the coarsest garb. His conversation was marked by a cordial spirit, a ready animated sympathy with the feelings of his associates. Nothing seemed too trivial to interest him which gave them pleasure. On this evening, even young James Stuart found himself attended to, when describing the amusements of schoolboys here, and asking questions respecting those common in more southern lands. He had in a remarkable degree, probably as the result of this very fulness of sympathy, the faculty of drawing out the feelings of others. Mrs. Stuart in all her long acquaintance with Isabel had never heard her converse with less restraint, unveil more completely all the quick impulses and warm affections of her nature, than while comparing her remembrances of her own early home with Mr. Falconer's account of life in Virginia, and preparing him for the variations from both which he would find in the scenes he was now visiting. Mr. Elliot came in about eight o'clock, and then followed communications respecting Marion; diverting accounts of difficulties into which his light, gay nature had betrayed him, and from which he had been extricated by his cousin's discretion, and more gratifying proofs that he was, under that cousin's influence, acquiring greater stability, and more earnest views of his duties.

The evening seemed to Isabel but to have commenced when Mrs. Elliot's carriage was announced. Reluctantly she rose and left the quiet *coterie* so much better suited to

her taste, for Mrs. Fenton's *soirée*, and though this entertainment was pronounced by many to be the gem of the season, it appeared to her truly insipid. Through the artificial softness and studied flatteries of the gentlemen surrounding Grace and herself, a deep, manly voice, expressive of earnest kindness was sounding on her ear; and above their flowing locks rose more than once to fancy's view, a broad, bold brow, and eyes of command tempered with gentleness.

The next morning at breakfast Mr. Elliot's paper stood neglected at his side, while he descanted with unusual animation on the interesting qualities of the new acquaintance recommended to them by Captain Stuart.

"I shall call on him this morning, and if you are not engaged for this evening, I will ask him to come up and spend it here."

"Why do you not ask him to dinner?" inquired Mrs. Elliot.

"I intend to do so, but not to-day, I am too much engaged, and I do not wish to delay your acquaintance with such an agreeable person. You will be delighted with his anecdotes of Marion, with which, you know, we could not ask him to entertain a dinner party."

The mother was bribed; she would be disengaged.

Mr. Falconer came in the evening, and again with that tact which only a kindly heart can bestow, he adapted himself to each, and won the encomiums of all. Grace was loud in her expression of admiration. "The French talk of *l'air noble*," she exclaimed, "but his is *l'air royale*, and yet so kind and gentle. What a hero he would make if he were a soldier; he ought to be in the army. Do you not think him like Captain Stuart, Isabel?"

"Like Captain Stuart!" Isabel repeated, with something

like surprise that Grace could fancy she had ever seen another person like Mr. Falconer—"Oh, no! not at all."

"I know he has not the same colored hair, or eyes, or shape of the face; in short, that is not the kind of likeness I mean; but they are certainly alike," persisted Grace.

Isabel did not answer; a wise omission, as no argument could have made her perceive a resemblance that existed solely in the fancy of Grace, who having idealized Captain Stuart into a very heroic personage, now saw in Mr. Falconer the traits of her ideal.

Mr. Falconer had been invited to call on the following morning, and accompany Mrs. Elliot to an exhibition of pictures. He accepted the invitation with evident pleasure. The exhibition contained many interesting pictures, but Mr. Falconer lingered longest over a dying Magdalen. It was a gem of art. The beautiful form lay extended in all the helpless languor of approaching death. Already his touch had paralyzed the muscles and unstrung the delicate nerves, but the heart still resisted his power, and in the cross laid upon the bosom, in the upturned position of the pallid face, and the rapt gaze of the darkening eyes, it was evident that heart was fixed on Him, the Divine, who, when others from their self-elevation looked disdainfully down upon her, spoke those words of gentle command, "Go, and sin no more." Words of divine power, which taught her that there was sympathy even for her, the outcast; sympathy, and therefore hope—hope, and therefore salvation.

"You seem to prefer the Magdalen to the Madonna, Mr. Falconer," said Mrs. Elliot, as she saw him still return to it, and stand with folded arms gazing earnestly upon it.

"I believe we are all more deeply touched by the Magdalen. Nothing can be lovelier than that Madonna," he added, turning to a fine copy of Raphael's celebrated picture, "it is woman in her sweetest aspect—love irradiates

every feature, yet it is earthly love, mother-love, tender but proud; while in the Magdalen," and his eyes were again riveted upon it, "there is a touch of the angel's adoration mingled with the sorrow of the mortal. Purity, with which our conscious hearts forbid us to feel full sympathy, sits throned on the fair brow of the Madonna, but here is one who we see at a glance has sinned and suffered, and over whose sufferings love throws a halo of glory."

"Different as the pictures are in character, they express the same sentiment—love," said Mrs. Elliot.

It was a flimsy, superficial view, and Mr. Falconer replied, "Pardon me; they both express love, it is true, but the one, as I have said, an earthly love—love for the babe of the manger; the other, a love all heavenly, for the Divine Saviour. I thank you," he continued, turning suddenly, and as if forcibly away, "I thank you for having brought me to see this picture; I will think of it when I preach, and it will help me to depict the union of sorrowing penitence and trusting love in the pardoned sinner."

All eyes in the little party were turned with surprise upon him.

"When you preach!" exclaimed Mrs. Elliot, "why surely you are not a clergyman."

"Why not?" he asked, with a smile.

"Why you do not look in the least like one."

The smile became a laugh, as he replied, "I was not before aware that the members of my profession bore a personal likeness to each other."

"Only a general family resemblance, in which, however, you do not in the least participate; besides, you do not converse like a clergyman; I have not heard you say a word about religion."

Mr. Falconer's countenance became suddenly grave, as he answered, "I may not have spoken of religion, but I

trust you cannot convict me of having spent two hours in your company yesterday evening and one this morning, without speaking *religiously*."

"I am not sure that I understand your distinction," said Mrs. Elliot more gravely, for she began to perceive that he was in earnest in the assertion which she had hoped was only a jest.

Mr. Falconer explained.

"There is no subject of interest to man," he said, "that may not be treated religiously—that is, in such a manner as to exercise in ourselves and cultivate in others that heavenly spirit which Christianity enjoins, and which is the very essence of our religion; and thus, I conceive, is every Christian minister bound to treat them."

Mrs. Elliot was silent. She continued polite and attentive to Mr. Falconer, but the life of their intercourse was gone, for she felt that there neither was, nor could be, any sympathy in their spirits. Grace too regretted this discovery. Should she have spoken the language of her heart, she would have exclaimed, "What a noble soldier has been spoiled in this preacher!" She became reserved, constrained. Isabel alone remained unchanged by Mr. Falconer's avowal. It had surprised her, but only for a moment; her next sensation was wonder at herself that she could have been surprised at learning that so noble a being had devoted himself to the noblest of all professions. She was conscious of a pleasurable emotion in reflecting on what he had said; a feeling of sympathy with him, a desire that she too in her humbler and narrower sphere might promote the cultivation of that heavenly spirit of which he had spoken. Even Mr. Elliot, on learning that Mr. Falconer belonged to the clergy, withdrew so much of his admiration from him as to decide that a dinner-party was an unnecessary compliment, though he gave him a very friend-

ly general invitation to visit him. Of this invitation Mr. Falconer occasionally availed himself, though not very frequently, for, as he became more generally known, engagements of various kinds crowded upon him. Isabel met him often at Mrs. Stuart's, where they spent many quiet evenings together, as a slight interval of repose in the fashionable world at this time left her more at liberty to pursue her own inclinations than she had lately been. And Isabel heard Mr. Falconer preach. She was invited by Mrs. Stuart one Sabbath morning to accompany her to her own church, she knew not for what especial reason, till, looking to the pulpit, she met the impressive countenance of her new acquaintance.

There was something in the very action with which Mr. Falconer rose at the commencement of the service—something in the deep, earnest tones which broke on the ears of the assembled worshippers, that awed the lightest spirit into reverence, and withdrew all thought—even the thoughts of Isabel—from the man, to fix them on the subject which rapt his own spirit into such fervent yet humble adoration. His sermon was not written, and therefore, there was no withdrawal of the eyes—those conductors of spirit—from his hearers. His manner was natural, graceful, and impressive, his tones deep and manly, at times grave and earnest, at times full of impassioned feeling, stirring the heart like a trumpet's call. "How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" was his subject, and while he sketched the greatness of this salvation—great in the depth of misery from which it rescued, great in the height of joy to which it elevated, great in the love which inspired, the wisdom which planned, the power which executed—and as he appealed to his hearers to pronounce in the depth of each heart how they could escape if they neglected it, the most thoughtless was spell-bound by his power—and Isabel

gazed and listened as if on every word or look life hung suspended.

Such powers cannot remain long unknown, and soon Mr. Falconer was sought, courted, complimented we were about to say, but that would have been wrong, for beneath the grave rebuke of his eye, flattery lost its glib and oily tongue, stammered and grew silent. Great was Mrs. Elliot's surprise, when she found the fashionable world forsaking their usual haunts, to fill the churches in which it was known that Mr. Falconer would preach. She followed the fashion, and regretted that she had lost the opportunity to lead it. Those who have seen the change that too often comes over even the conscientious Christian preacher, over whom has passed the blighting breath of popular applause—those who have sorrowed to see the simplicity of the Gospel yielding to worldly glosses; who have marked the affected airs of vanity displace lowly humility, and the man of God become the idol of the drawing-room, a *petit maître* in dress and manners—may well tremble for Mr. Falconer; but he was made of sterner stuff, than to be thus bent by the breath of man. How he passed through the ordeal the reader may judge from the following extract from a letter to his friend Captain Stuart. "You ask," he writes, "what detains me in New York. I am not sure that I can answer the question. It is not, as my mother seems to apprehend, inability to travel, for my health is as vigorous as ever; nor is it, as you suggest, any belief that I am doing good in my vocation, though I preach often and always to crowded churches—crowded with a very fashionable audience, who, if I judge aright, listen to me as they would do to a new opera-singer. I say this to you because you will understand the feeling it creates; you know me too well to believe for a moment that I am flattered by it. They are attracted by the novelty of my style, by its very

want, perhaps, of that artificial polish, of those conventional restraints, to which they have been accustomed; but they can little conceive the feelings with which I look around on the assemblage that they doubtless consider so flattering. How gladly would I exchange the applause of such hearers for the conviction that I had led one humble, simple, earnest spirit, in the stillness of the heart, to discard the world's low motives, and to adopt as theirs the Christian's faith, and the Christian's hope."

In another letter, dated in June, Mr. Falconer writes: "Tell Lieutenant Elliot that I have had much kind attention from his father and mother. Mrs. Elliot has invited me to visit them at their summer residence on the Hudson river, to which they removed only a week ago. I shall go to them in a few days. Your lovely pupils—they are very lovely—still speak of 'dear Captain Stuart,' as the best and kindest of language-masters."

Mrs. Elliot, in this invitation to Mr. Falconer, was making a bold stroke to recover the opportunity she had lost of attaching to her *coterie* so distinguished and popular a man. In the intimate intercourse and hourly kindnesses of home-life, she would soon efface all remembrance, if he still retained any, of the slight coolness that had marked her manner in their earlier association. She had a deeper interest in this subject, than even the desire to win for herself the *éclat* of a patroness. She had learned from Marion that Mr. Falconer was the heir to large estates, and the descendant of one of the oldest and proudest families of the Old Dominion. With such advantages of fortune and social position, and such personal endowments, he was really the best match extant, and it would be injustice to her nieces not to make some effort to secure him for one of them. She had always intended Grace for Marion, and Isabel for Walter Stuart; but Marion wrote lately with so

much seriousness of his attachment to a lady in Virginia, that she must relinquish all hope of the first. Walter and Isabel, she still thought, would make a capital match; and if she could only persuade Grace to give up her inclination for a military man, and take a clergyman instead, she should feel that she had done her duty by her young relatives. So easily, in imagination, did Mrs. Elliot deal with that subtle thing, the human heart. The next chapter may unfold to us how far her anticipations were likely to prove correct.

CHAPTER VI.

"Thus heavenly hope is all serene,
And earthly hope, how bright soe'er,
Still fluctuates o'er this changing scene,
As false and fleeting as 'tis fair."

Townshend.

"My Father made them all!" was the exulting exclamation of Mr. Falconer's heart as he stepped abroad the morning after his arrival at Mr. Elliot's country house, and gazed upon the beauty that surrounded him. He had arrived too late on the preceding evening to discern more than the dim outlines of objects, and he now found himself standing nearly on the summit of a lofty hill which fell on one side rapidly, almost precipitously, to the bed of a small stream, whose sheltered waters lay like an unruffled mirror, reflecting the beams of the just risen sun. On the west the descent was more gradual to the Hudson, beyond whose swift waves rose the Palisades, softened in their bold

outline and rugged surface by the transparent curtain of mist which the sportive breezes blew hither and thither at their pleasure. Emerging from Mr. Elliot's grounds, which were extensive and tastefully arranged, Mr. Falconer pursued the road leading through waving fields of grain, or flowery clover, or orchards of spreading trees, down to the river. All the signs of active, industrious life were around him. Farmers were driving their teams to the hay-field, and from many a cottage-yard, as he passed, the cow came lowing forth on her way to the pasture-ground, having already yielded her daily portion of milk. Mr. Falconer was a true lover of nature, and now there was something of novelty in her aspect which rendered it doubly charming. He had walked about two miles from Mr. Elliot's, and was again within a quarter of a mile of his house on his return, when he saw a little girl, apparently about ten years old, clad in clean but coarse garments, approaching him. Mr. Falconer stood still in the road, and the child was so intently conning the pages of a book, which she held open in her hand, that she was actually in contact with him before she observed him. She looked up with some terror at what the gentleman might think of her seemingly rude jostling, but as she met his eyes, the terror passed away, and a smile lit up her bright and healthy, though not handsome face.

"What pretty story are you reading?" asked Mr. Falconer, who seldom passed any one without some expression of kindly feeling.

"I am learning my lesson, sir."

"And are you going to school now?"

"No, sir! I don't go to school; I go up to the big house, and say my lesson to Miss Isabel." There was a glow of pleasure on Mr. Falconer's face as he heard that name, but he said nothing, and the little girl added, with a blush

half of modesty and half of triumph, "Miss Isabel says I shall soon read well enough to read the Bible for mammy."

"And cannot mammy read it for herself?" asked Mr. Falconer.

"Mammy's blind," said the child, with sadness in her looks and tones, "and I must hurry home to get her breakfast."

She dropped a courtesy, and was tripping on when Mr. Falconer stopped her again, with the question, "Where do you live?"

"In that house," she answered, pointing to a very small one near by.

"And suppose I go with you and read the Bible to-day for mammy, would she like it?"

"Oh yes, sir! she always likes to hear that."

In a few minutes, Mr. Falconer was seated in the little cot by the side of poor blind Annie Linden. Annie had not been always blind. She married young, and when our little acquaintance—Isabel's pupil—was only two or three weeks old, her husband, who had gone out with some fishermen, was drowned. His dead body was brought home to his wretched wife, and the shock brought on her an inflammatory fever, from which she recovered only with the total loss of sight. Hard was the struggle for many years for poor blind Annie to live and support her child, whose existence was the only thing that reconciled her to life. The neighbors helped her, however. One would hoe her little garden and sow her seeds—another would occasionally see that it was free from weeds—and a third would come in the autumn and dig her potatoes and gather in her beans. The women too would sew for her and her child, though Annie soon became almost as expert at using her needle without sight, as she had formerly been with it. In return for these kindnesses Annie would spin

and knit. When Mr. Elliot's family were in the country, Annie received much of her food from their table, but no one had thought of visiting her, till Mrs. Stuart had done so, during a visit to Mrs. Elliot. She found her grateful for aid, but thirsting for sympathy more refined than that of her rustic neighbors, and for communion with some intelligent mind, from which she might learn more of the promises respecting that better land, where "there is no darkness." It was Mrs. Stuart who had led Isabel and Grace to this abode of poverty. Many of the comforts that now appeared around her humble home and perhaps awakened Mr. Falconer's surprise, were their gifts. Grace had not been the least liberal in these presents, and she had won the heart of the little Lucy by various pieces of finery, more suited to her taste than to her position; but Isabel visited Annie Linden, read to her, listened to her when she recounted her present trials, or dwelt on her happy memories, and it was of Isabel that she spoke most to Mr. Falconer this morning.

"Miss Grace gave me this pretty bonnet," said the little girl, who thought Miss Grace had not received her due share of praise.

"Miss Grace is very good, but Miss Isabel spends many an hour teaching you to read, that I may not have to send you away for almost the whole day to the district school."

Mr. Falconer parted from Annie Linden with a promise that he would see her soon again.

"I have been making a visit to one of your neighbors already," said he to Mrs. Elliot, when they were seated at the breakfast-table.

"Ah! to whom?" asked that lady, with surprise.

"To a blind woman."

"Oh! to Annie Linden—your *protégée*, Grace."

Grace blushed, for she felt that Annie Linden was quite

as much, or more, Isabel's *protégée* than hers. Mr. Falconer glanced on her, and then suffering his eyes to rest longer on Isabel, said with a smile, "I met your pupil, who took me home with her, and introduced me to her mother."

"I am glad she did," replied Isabel, quietly, anticipating no praise, dreaming of no rivalry, as the result of her attention to an ignorant child and a desolate woman. "Poor Annie is made happy for days by a kind word."

"I found that among all the benefits she had received none were so deeply felt as your visits."

Isabel colored, and Mrs. Elliot, who did not altogether like the course of affairs, exclaimed, "I did not know she was such a gossip as to prefer visits to any thing else."

"I do not think it is at all from a love of gossip," said Mr. Falconer gently, "but you must remember that by her blindness she is shut out from all communication with the external world, except through the medium of others. Life would be to her solitary confinement in a dark cell, but for the friendly voices that sometimes greet her."

"I never thought of that before," exclaimed Grace, "I will go to see her every day."

Mr. Falconer smiled on her, and Mrs. Elliot was better pleased.

Grace was perfectly sincere in this expression of feeling. Mr. Falconer had aroused her sympathies, and she would at that moment have made a much greater sacrifice than an hour of her time daily to brighten poor Annie's darkened life. Unfortunately these feelings, having no root in principle, were soon dissipated.

In a few days, Mrs. Elliot began to perceive that things were not proceeding between Mr. Falconer and Grace as she could desire. And yet she found no difficulty in moulding Grace to her wishes—wishes whose ultimate

object was still unrevealed to her, lest her delicacy should forbid her to aid in its attainment.

Alas for Grace! In the tenderness of her home her affections had been stimulated till they had become, as we have seen, the principles of her being. She was like those plants which, having no independent root, draw their sustenance from other trees. Her soul drew its life, not from the great Source of Being, but from human sources, from the impure fountains of earth. While she was in closest relation with the good, the true, the noble, she had seemed to partake of their nature, but her association, for nearly three years past, with lighter and less lofty spirits, had imparted to her less pure elements of character. The desire of love had degenerated into a thirst for admiration, and selfish vanity too often ruled her life. At present, Mr. Falconer was the only person within her reach, whose homage could minister to her vanity—Isabel was her only rival, and no effort was spared to attract the one, and eclipse the other. Never had she experienced so little success, and with the difficulty of the contest increased the desire for victory. All her accomplishments—and they were many—were exhibited, and exhibited in vain. Mr. Falconer talked of beautiful views; from this the transition to landscape painting was easy, and at a hint from Mrs. Elliot, Grace produced her landscapes. They were spirited, and Mr. Falconer praised them as they deserved, but he pointed out their faults with the freedom of a friend, and what was still less agreeable, he turned from them to ask if Isabel did not paint, to entreat for a sight of the products of her pencil, which, when seen, obtained from him at least equal approval. Grace was remarkable for the grace, the correct taste, and impressive character of her recitation, and more than once, at Mrs. Elliot's suggestion, she exercised this power for Mr. Falconer's amusement.

Perhaps she was never more attractive to a man of intellect and sensibility, than on these occasions; her slight form instinct with grace and feeling, her charming features lit by a loftier sentiment than usually animated them, she seemed to glow with an enthusiasm, that for a time destroyed her self-consciousness, and consequently overcame her diffidence. While she uttered words of fire in tones of melody, Mr. Falconer gazed and listened with a kindling eye and heart, but it was to Isabel he turned for sympathy with the feelings thus excited. Mrs. Elliot had never seen so impracticable a man. It may be thought strange that this lady was not induced to modify her designs on Mr. Falconer's heart in favor of her elder niece, but Mrs. Elliot had always great attachment to *her* plans, because they were *her* plans, and in the present case, she had another and a better reason urging her to perseverance. She had done all in her power to awaken in Grace a preference for Mr. Falconer, and she really believed she had succeeded. Vanity often wears the guise of love so completely, that we cannot wonder it should deceive a superficial observer like Mrs. Elliot. Nay, even the heart in which it throbs may, and does often, mistake the feeling that sends a quick glow to the cheek, and sparkle to the eye, at look or word in which it reads anticipated triumph, or that causes it to shrink with a painful spasm, from the hated sound of a rival's praise.

And how was Isabel affected, amid these tumultuous desires and efforts? She was in a dream in which of all that was passing around her she only saw that it was to *her* eyes Mr. Falconer turned for the expression of sympathy, that it was *her* sentiments he sought to elicit, in *her* pursuits he interested himself, that without a word of compliment he yet conveyed to her every hour the conviction that she had inspired him both with admiration and esteem.

The strength of Isabel's heart had never been exhausted by enthusiastic fancies. Gentle but strong was the current of her affections. With a lofty ideal of true nobleness in man, she had found for the first time, in Mr. Falconer, the realization of that ideal; and this being, at once so strong and so gentle, this "bright, particular star," to which the choicest spirits in her world did homage, looked down with kindliest influences upon her. Isabel had never asked if Mr. Falconer loved her, she had never attempted to analyze her feelings towards him, she only felt that since she knew him, especially since she had been thus domesticated with him, a new sense of blessedness had been added to her life, a deeper feeling of joyous thankfulness to Heaven had swelled her heart. She had been so accustomed to yield precedence to Grace, to see her brought forward by Mrs. Elliot into a more glaring light than she was willing to stand in, that she did not suspect the motives of the present display.

And Mr. Falconer—did he comprehend the varied elements of life around him? He saw enough of Mrs. Elliot's manœuvres to smile at them. He read the vanity of Grace, and was scrupulously careful not to flatter it; of softer feelings, or even of a design to excite softer feelings in him, he did not suspect her. Had he done so, he would scarcely have felt at liberty to remain in her society, and yet Mr. Elliot's house held for him a great attraction—Isabel. He had never spoken to her a word of love. There was a modest dignity about her, which forbade too sudden an approach to such a subject; and yet there were times, when her gentle deference to his opinions, the sudden flush of her cheek or sparkle of her eye, at the discovery of some new point of sympathy between them, or some other of those nameless modes in which the heart of a sensitive woman often betrays itself to one of delicate

perceptions, before consciousness has taught her that she has a secret to guard, made his heart beat high with the hope that already amid her meek and vestal thoughts, his image was enthroned. At these moments, perhaps, he was most of all willing to be silent, for there was a charm in this unconscious betrayal, which he felt that a breath would destroy. Had doubt or apprehension for a passing instant shadowed the open brow of Isabel, he could not have preserved his silence; future hope, present happiness, all would bave been cast on the hazard of a word, had there heen the remotest reason for supposing that word important to her peace.

Mrs. Elliot was fruitful in devising means for withdrawing Isabel from Mr. Falconer's society; Mr. Falconer was no less ready in evading her devices.

"Isabel," said Mrs. Elliot one evening, just as the little party, beginning to revive from the languor of an unusually warm day, had collected in a room overlooking the water, for the enjoyment of the breeze, "will you finish this little piece of work for me this evening? I would not ask you, but it is for your friend, Mrs. Stuart, and I want to send it to her by the morning's boat."

Isabel took it cheerfully, and was about to order the argand lamp to be brought into the parlor in which they were sitting, but Mrs. Elliot anticipated this and exclaimed, "I am sorry to send you from us, but my eyes will not bear the light of a lamp this evening; suppose you take the work to your uncle's study."

Isabel could make no objection, though she went reluctantly. It was a capital ruse, and Mrs. Elliot congratulated herself upon its success; but her congratulations soon ceased. She had not had time to place Grace at the piano, with which she intended that she should entertain Mr. Falconer, when he rose, saying, "If you will excuse

me, Mrs. Elliot, I will go to the lamp for a few minutes. I received a letter this evening, which I have not yet read."

It was clear that Mr. Falconer was not a man to be easily managed. It seemed equally clear that his letter was not a letter to be easily read, for an hour passed away, and still he had not returned. Mrs. Elliot lost the ease and quietness of manner on which she prided herself. She moved about the room, now gazing from a window, and now lounging in a rocking chair,

"Every *where* by turns, and no *where* long."

Grace sat silent, and—must we say it?—sullen, nursing her bitter thoughts, and really believing herself a very ill-used and miserable being. He would have had a profitless task, who should have undertaken to convince her that her life was not one of peculiar trial. What were youth and health, beauty, and fortune, and talent, devoted friends and numerous admirers, while Mr. Falconer bowed not at her feet? And Isabel, who had shared her home, whom her father had taken to his bosom as another daughter; Isabel, whom she had so loved, that she should be so ungrateful, so ungenerous, as to detain from her side the only being in whom she had ever felt the slightest interest. If Isabel loved him too, she could excuse it, but she did not, she could not love him, or she would make greater efforts to attract him.

How little did Grace understand the feeling which prompted these hurried and inconsistent thoughts!

Mr. Elliot had fallen asleep on a couch. The sudden closing of a window aroused him, and starting up, he suddenly began to address Mr. Falconer.

"Mr. Falconer is not here, Mr. Elliot," said Mrs. Elliot, in a tone which made as near an approach to tartness,

as her really gentle nature and lady-like habits would permit.

"What! is he still in the study with Isabel? That is hardly fair for my little Grace; your aunt must invite some more company, you must have somebody to make the agreeable to you, while Mr. Falconer plays the devoted to Bella."

Mr. Elliot, as he spoke, had drawn Grace caressingly to him, but that speech was the one drop which her cup could not contain, and struggling wildly, she burst from the arms of her astonished uncle, and rushed sobbing from the room. There was no longer a doubt in Mrs. Elliot's mind of her unfortunate attachment, and she sympathized, as we can only sympathize with sorrow which we are conscious of having, at least in some degree, caused. It was a sympathy so powerful, that it stimulated Mrs. Elliot to new exertion. The battle might not yet be lost, the fatal words not yet spoken. But every moment was of consequence, and the first step must be to interrupt the present dangerous tête-à-tête. Grace had scarcely left the room, Mr. Elliot had scarcely recovered from his surprise at her singular agitation, so far as to inquire its cause, when, having arrived at this conclusion, Mrs. Elliot rang the bell, and ordering refreshments into the study, turned to Mr. Elliot.

"What is the matter with Grace, did you ask? I am sure I cannot tell, some girlish caprice which will be forgotten to-morrow: but it is late, suppose we join Mr. Falconer and Isabel in the study," she said lightly, as if thinking only of the present hour.

The letter which Mr. Falconer had desired to read, was from his mother; and he had spoken to Isabel of her, of what his father had been, of his regret that nature had denied him the sweet companionship of a sister, of his conviction of the necessity of woman's influence to the

formation of true and complete excellence in man. His language grew more energetic, his tones lower and deeper, the expression of his eyes more tender and confiding. Isabel trembled with a new and strange emotion, which spoke more eloquently in her quickly throbbing heart, her glowing cheeks, and downcast eyes, than it could have done in words. A few minutes more, and those words would have been spoken; those irrevocable words which would have indissolubly linked their earthly destinies; already they were formed in Mr. Falconer's mind and trembled on his lips, when they were arrested by the entrance of Mr. and Mrs. Elliot.

"I fear, Mr. Falconer, you will begin to consider a visit to a New-York country-house as a very *triste* affair," exclaimed Mrs. Elliot.

"I—I assure you, I have found nothing in my own experience, Mrs. Elliot, to justify such a conclusion," said Mr. Falconer, as he cast a glance not in the least degree *triste* on his blushing companion.

"For myself, I really need refreshments," continued Mrs. Elliot, as she helped herself to some grapes; "Mr. Elliot has slept away the evening, and—"

"Nay, nay, only dreamed it away," expostulated Mr. Elliot.

"Slept, slept, I repeat, and Grace has been as abstracted as a young poet inditing his first stanza to the moon; a dozen such evenings would send me back to the city in the midst of the dog-days."

"Better bring the city to you," said Mr. Elliot.

"A capital suggestion; I will act on it at once, before I sleep. Come with me to my room, Isabel, and help me arrange my list of *eligibles* for invitation."

"Had you not better stay here and allow us to assist you?" asked Mr. Falconer.

"Oh, no; Mr. Elliot is a cipher in such matters, and you have not lived long enough with us to understand yet what constitutes an eligible."

"A person of agreeable qualities, who can amuse others and be easily amused in turn; is not that the definition of eligible in this connection?"

"No, no; that is the smallest possible fraction of its meaning. This agreeable person must belong neither to the *nouveaux riches* nor the *anciens pauvres;* he must—"

"Stay, stay; pray enlighten me before you proceed: how would his connection with either of these classes affect his powers of pleasing?"

"Excuse me, I will explain another time, but I must make my list now, and I see you will not aid me in it. Come, Isabel."

When Mrs. Elliot found herself in her own room with Isabel alone, instead of commencing at once with the subject on which she had spoken so gayly, her countenance became grave, her manner abstracted, and after remaining for several minutes perfectly silent, she looked suddenly up with the startling question, "Isabel, are you in love with Mr. Falconer?"

Mrs. Elliot had taken the advice of an ancient critic, and plunged at once "*in medias res.*"

Isabel looked up and looked down, turned pale and turned red, opened her lips to speak and closed them without uttering a sound, and when at length compelled to say something, could only repeat in fainter tones, "In love with Mr. Falconer!"

"Yes; that is my question, straightforward and simple; and I want a simple and straightforward answer; are you, or are you not in love with Mr. Falconer?"

"Has Mr. Falconer said he was in love with me?" was on Isabel's lips, but there was a coldness and decision in

her aunt's tones and manner, which did not suit the ambassadress of love; not to one who spoke and looked thus, could feelings be unveiled, which were not yet confessed even to herself, and Isabel's reply was again an evasive exclamation of "Oh, aunt! how can you ask such a question? What have I done to make you think that—that—" she paused, and hung her head lower than before.

"Then you are not in love with him," ejaculated Mrs. Elliot, ready to believe what she wished. "My dear child! what a load of misery does that assurance take from me; now there is some hope for poor Grace."

"Hope for Grace! what do you mean, Aunt Elliot?" asked Isabel, turning pale.

"Why, Isabel, surely you cannot have been so absorbed with yourself, as not to perceive how that poor child has suffered in the apprehension that Mr. Falconer was devoting himself to you. She has tried until to-night to conceal her feelings, but to-night, all attempt at self-control was abandoned, and she has gone to her room, weeping and miserable."

Isabel listened in dismay. The very revulsion of feeling which she experienced as she attempted to connect Grace and Mr. Falconer in her imagination, revealed to her the true condition of her own heart. Insensibly she had come to regard Mr. Falconer as her teacher, guide, and friend. He was connected with all her present joys and future hopes; and now, all were vanishing from her grasp—all—joy and hope were alike melting into thin air. For the first time in Isabel's life, a sense of injustice, where Grace was concerned, crept over her. Ever thus, from her childhood, had she been called upon to yield her wishes to those of Grace, and why should it be so? was not she too a creature of God, made capable of pleasure and pain, and with a right to the enjoyment of all bestowed

on her by His Providence. She sat with her elbow resting on the table, and her hand pressed to her forehead, while these thoughts rushed rapidly through her mind; unheeding, even if she heard, Mrs. Elliot, who continued to mingle the expression of present gratulation and hope with the description of past anxieties. Isabel's heart grew hard within her. There was a marble rigidity about her features, a proud and cold expression in her eye, as she raised her head. She was about to disclaim all right on the part of any one to inquire into her feelings on such a subject, and all desire to be made acquainted with the feelings of Grace. It was time enough for inquiries or observations, when Mr. Falconer should profess a preference for either of them. As she looked up, Mrs. Elliot, awed by her manner out of her mood of self-gratulation, became suddenly silent; but after opening her lips to speak, Isabel dropped her head into her hand again, and remained mute. What had thus changed her purpose? It was the memory of her vow. Its very words seemed suddenly to flash in characters of fire upon her brain. "Her happiness shall be as dear to me as my own, nay, dearer; for remembering that I owe all to her father, I will hold no possession too valuable, no feeling too powerful, no hope too dear to be relinquished, if her happiness demand the sacrifice." It had been a rash vow, but she knew that he who would dwell with God, "though he swear to his own hurt, changeth not." And should she change, what would be her reward? Even were she assured of Mr. Falconer's love, could she be happy without the approval of her own conscience and the smile of God? And could these be hers, if she hardened her heart against her cousin? All was now a whirlwind of feeling. She could not reason on the probabilities of Mr. Falconer's offering himself to Grace; there was but one question for her, should she stand in the

way of his doing so? She rose suddenly, and turning to Mrs. Elliot, said with more than usual dignity, and perhaps, also with more than usual coldness of manner, "You will oblige me, aunt, by not recurring to this subject. I must speak to Grace myself. You may rest assured, however, that I will never do any thing to make her unhappy."

"I knew you would not, Isabel," commenced Mrs. Elliot, but Isabel was gone; she had now to act, not to talk. She approached the room in which Grace slept, and through which her own was entered. She laid her hand upon the latch of the door, but had no power to turn it. Her heart throbbed audibly, and relinquishing her purpose, she passed on to the farther end of the passage and stood before an open window. The evening was serene, but the very peacefulness of external nature was irritating to her; fever seemed throbbing in her pulses and coursing through her veins. She closed her eyes and leaned her head against the casement. The evening breeze blew cool and moist upon her brow, and brought to her at first scarce conscious ear, the low whispering of an aspen tree, and the plashing of the waves upon the pebbly beach. Who can tell the secret influence by which the harmonies of nature reproduce themselves in the soul of man? These low, soft sounds were as "the still, small voice," hushing the tempest of her soul with "Peace—be still." They drew her thoughts from the bounded and finite, to the Infinite, the Everlasting. She prayed;—not with words, for at that moment hers were feelings, thoughts for which she had no words—but in the deep stillness of her soul she laid herself at the feet, in the arms of Divine Love, and sought to lose all self-will, all earthly desire, in the composure of a confiding, childlike faith. Strength and peace flowed into her heart, and with calm resolution she moved again

towards the door, which she had lately left with such overwhelming emotion. She attempted to open it, but it was fastened within.

"It is I, Grace," she said softly; and with a quick, nervous movement, Grace unbolted the door and admitted her. Isabel would have spoken to her at once, but Grace, as if to render her doing so impossible, turned instantly to her bed, and knelt to offer the prayer which she had been accustomed from her childhood to present before she slept. It was a form—a good, and right form; but we fear a form only, exercising no purifying or calming influence upon the heart, for, as Grace rose, instead of approaching Isabel with her usual good-night kiss, she lay down and closed her eyes as if in sleep. Isabel felt that now, if ever, must she speak, and drawing near the bed, she bent over Grace and said, "You have not said good-night to me."

"Good-night; I am too sleepy to talk, Isabel."

There was painfully curbed impatience in her tone.

"I hope you are not too sleepy to hear me talk, for I want to tell you, that—that you are entirely mistaken, quite wrong, if you suppose, as I understood Aunt Elliot to-night, that I have ever—that Mr. Falconer has ever spoken, ever said one word to me of—of love."

The last word was almost in a whisper, but Grace heard it, heard all, and her countenance changed visibly. This change, perhaps, should have been confirmation enough to Isabel of the truth of Mrs. Elliot's report, but she would hear that truth from Grace herself, she would leave no room for doubt hereafter, to creep into her mind.

"And now," she said, "you will not let me feel that my aunt is regarded by you with more confidence than I. Tell me, whisper to me, if—indeed—you love him."

She had commenced in a light tone, but, spite of herself,

the few last words were uttered with difficulty, and came one by one, as if from her very heart. Grace did not speak, but a smile, a blush flitted across her fair face, and throwing her arms around Isabel's neck, she laid her head upon her bosom. It was enough. Without a word Isabel withdrew from her embrace, and turning away, put out the light and went to her own bed; not to sleep, but to "commune with her own heart, and be still."

CHAPTER VII.

"There will come a weary day,
When, overtasked at length,
Both love and hope, beneath the weight give way;
Then, with a statue's smile, a statue's strength,
Stands the mute sister Patience, nothing loth,
And both supporting, does the work of both."

Coleridge.

THE morning sun, glancing through the waving curtains of the window on her pillow, awoke Isabel from the troubled sleep into which she had fallen at daybreak. She could not for a moment tell why there was such a strange weight at her heart, and why the sunlight was so painfully glaring to her, but as the light footsteps of Grace in her own room fell on her ear, the events of the last evening flashed vividly, instantaneously upon her, and with that quick, restless movement that marks an excited mind, she started from her bed and commenced her toilet. How a true affection interweaves its influence into the most trivial, as well as the most important events of life! Isabel had the day before made some difference in the ac-

customed arrangement of her hair, a slight difference, but Mr. Falconer had seen and admired it, and instinctively she now sought to produce the same effect. Suddenly the thought arose in her mind, "I have now no right to seek to please him." The braids fell from her trembling fingers, and she stood for some minutes with her hand pressed upon her eyes. She soon resumed her task, but her hair was arranged as usual. It was the first act of the sacrifice to which she had pledged herself.

When Grace Elliot met Mr. Falconer this morning the color rose to her cheek, and she cast down her eyes with as much pretty consciousness as though he could have known all which she had confessed or implied to others. Isabel on the contrary grew paler, and deeper sadness stole over her face as he offered her his morning salutation in tones more tender and earnest than those in which he addressed himself to others. The woman who resolves to discard from her affections an unworthy object, may shut down into her heart's depths the agony for which she blushes. Pride may smooth the brow and brighten the eye, may deepen the glow upon the cheek, and call gay smiles to the lip when every nerve is quivering with the bitter anguish of disappointed or wounded affection; but Isabel was stimulated by no such unhallowed passion. In holy stillness she had resolved to sacrifice a pure and blameless affection, a hope for which she had no cause to blush, to the obligation which should be in the eyes of all first and highest—the obligation to eternal rectitude and truth; and now, humbly, quietly, with no false glare of romantic enthusiasm around her, in the glow of no fire kindled by earthly passion, but in the serene light of Heaven itself, she went firmly, yet sadly, on her way. Again and again, during breakfast, Mr. Falconer turned a glance of tender inquiry to her clouded brow, but she

knew it not, for she avoided looking towards him. As Mrs. Elliot rose from the breakfast, she proposed a walk through the grounds. Mr. Falconer had taken his hat to accompany the ladies, but, observing that Isabel did not rise, he turned to her, and asked, "Are you not going with us?"

"No," she replied, "I—I believe I have some letters to write."

"You remind me that I have too," said Mr. Falconer, laying aside his hat, and adding, as he turned to Mrs. Elliot, "I think instead of indulging myself in a stroll this morning, I must write some letters."

Grace was already at the door and could not return, but she darted a reproachful glance at Isabel, who was too much absorbed in her own emotions to perceive it. Anxious to guard herself from the influence of looks and tones under which her resolution was becoming every instant more difficult to maintain, she was hastening from the room, when Mr. Falconer arrested her.

"May I ask you," he said, "to let me see that old history of Virginia, of which you spoke to me yesterday. I am going to write to my mother, and she is such a lover of old legends, that I should like to give her some description of the work."

Without a word of reply, Isabel turned towards Mr. Elliot's study for the book. She stood before its shelves, but Mr. Falconer was at her side, and as she raised her hand to reach the volume he laid his upon it, and said gently and respectfully, "May I claim your attention for a few minutes."

"The book—" said Isabel, blushing and endeavoring to withdraw her hand, but Mr. Falconer seemed to have paused only to arrange his thoughts, and he now resumed. "You cannot be unconscious, I think, of the deep interest

with which you have inspired me; I might have still hesitated to express it, but you look sad this morning, and the desire is uncontrollable to win the right of sympathizing with your sorrow, the privilege of asking what disturbs you; may I ask—"

Mr. Falconer became suddenly silent, for a deadly paleness had succeeded to the blush with which Isabel had heard his first avowal of regard; a mist seemed gathering before her eyes, and trembling visibly, she grasped the shelves before her for support. He drew a chair to her, and having seated her, continued, "You understand me, I am sure, and you will not keep me in suspense; a word will make me happy, or a word will—" he paused for a moment, then added with evident effort and in a lower tone, "silence me forever."

Isabel moved her lips, but his intently listening ear could catch no sound. He bent his head lower, and said in a voice which betrayed his agitation, "One word only; may I hope?"

In a hoarse whisper she replied, "I cannot; it is not possible for me—"

She was again silent. Can any wonder that she found it hard to put the cup of joy untasted from her lip.

"Would you say that you cannot give me the hope I ask?" questioned Mr. Falconer.

Isabel bowed her head. He attempted no remonstrance, offered no solicitation, but stood as if stunned at her side, till Mrs. Elliot's voice was heard approaching the house, then, uttering a fervent "God bless you," he darted from the room.

Half an hour after this scene, Mrs. Elliot entered the study and found Isabel still seated where Mr. Falconer had left her. Her face still wore the pallid hue, and fixed, despairing look with which the effort necessary to crush

out hope from his heart and her own had impressed it. It was as if her very spirit had been stiffened by that effort into stone, and would wear forever the form into which that hour had moulded it.

"What is the matter, Isabel?" asked Mrs. Elliot.

Isabel looked up with a bewildered expression, rose languidly from her chair, and without answering, walked slowly from the room to her own apartment, conscious only of a feeling of utter exhaustion—the weariness of an overtasked spirit.

About noon of the same day, Mr. Elliot and Mr. Falconer entered the room in which Mrs. Elliot and Grace were seated; the one engaged in writing invitations to her *eligibles*, the other trifling with a piece of embroidery.

"Ladies," said Mr. Elliot, "I bring you a subject for your eloquence. Your dull evenings or your threatened gayeties are about to drive Mr. Falconer away; he says he must leave us in this evening's boat."

Grace did not raise her eyes, but her varying color showed her emotion, while Mrs. Elliot exclaimed, "Leave us! Is this so, Mr. Falconer?"

Mr. Falconer smiled at her incredulity, as he expressed his regret at being compelled to leave them somewhat earlier than he had anticipated; but despite his smile his eyes wore the heavy aspect of sorrow, and Mrs. Elliot ventured to express the hope that he had received no unpleasant intelligence from home.

"None whatever," was the reply, which certainly threw no light on his motives.

"I shall see Lieutenant Elliot soon; pray do not let me go without any token of remembrance from his home. As the boat does not pass till five o'clock, you will have several hours to prepare your packages for him," said Mr. Falconer; pleased, it is probable, to divert attention from

himself. He soon withdrew to his own room to pack his trunks, leaving Grace and Mrs. Elliot to reflections of no pleasing character. Bitterly did Grace deplore the indiscretion into which she had been led the last evening by the impulses of wounded vanity and exacting self-love. She had betrayed Mr. Falconer's influence over her, and now all would see that she had no influence over him. She would appear to all contemned, slighted, rejected. She longed to be alone, yet had not courage to leave the room, but sat as if spell-bound, with burning cheeks and downcast eyes, and throbbing heart. Mrs. Elliot too had her own regrets in relation to this subject; regrets, which like those of Grace, were not unaccompanied by self-reproach. She dared not meet the eyes of Grace lest she should read in them the charge, "You have exposed me to this sorrow by awakening my interest in him, exciting my desire to please him, and unveiling to others the feelings you had yourself aroused." She was becoming in some slight degree conscious of the terrible responsibilities assumed by those who undertake to direct the affections and control the destinies of another. With a muttered excuse of looking for something to send to Marion, she hurried from Grace, who, relieved by her absence, waited only for the closing of a distant door, to assure her that she would not meet her aunt on the way, before she too stole away, like a guilty thing, to her own apartment.

Of all who met that day at Mr. Elliot's dinner-table, he alone had no secret emotion connected with his guest's approaching departure. His regrets were spoken warmly and frankly. Mrs. Elliot scarcely ventured to allude to hers, lest some word should touch too deeply the susceptible heart of Grace. Mr. Falconer strove to lead the conversation from himself and his movements to Walter Stuart and Marion Elliot, but though he said little of his own

feelings in bidding farewell to his kind entertainers, his subdued tones, his heavy eyes, and occasionally vague replies, seemed sufficiently indicative of sorrow. Isabel, when first informed of Mr. Falconer's intended departure, knew not whether most to fear or to desire another interview with him. She proposed remaining in her own room on the plea of a severe headache, but Mrs. Elliot declared her doing so when Mr. Falconer was leaving them probably forever, would be very disrespectful to him; and pale, silent, and subdued, she accompanied her aunt to the dining-room.

"Grace, my love," said Mrs. Elliot, as they were placing themselves at table, "sit on this side, and give your cousin your seat; she has a bad headache, and the light in her eyes would increase it."

This arrangement placed Isabel opposite to Mr. Falconer, and Grace at his side, where any telltale emotion might pass unperceived by him. But Grace seemed to have no emotion requiring concealment; at least, he must have looked beyond the outward signs, who had discerned any in her animated face, her gay words or frequent laugh. Mrs. Elliot, it is true, suspected that the glow on her check was but the flush of excitement, and saw or fancied the dark current of pride mingling its bitter waters with the sparkling flow of her light words and her bright smiles. Isabel frequently turned her eyes with a feeling of wonder upon Grace. Once, as she withdrew them, she encountered Mr. Falconer's glance, and in an instant, cheeks, neck, and brow were crimsoned.

The dinner was at an end. Mr. Falconer's baggage had already been sent to the point at which the steamboat usually stopped to take in passengers. The time was approaching when he must be there himself. Mr. Elliot proposed that they should all accompany him—"Except

you, Isabel," he added; "it is still quite sunny, and I cannot let you walk so far with a headache. Poor child! you look quite ill with it."

Isabel made no remonstrance. She scarce knew what she desired to do. She grew every moment more and more wretched, more and more passive, because more and more hopeless. Mrs. Elliot and Grace left the room to get their bonnets, Mr. Elliot walked to the piazza, to look up the river for the steamboat—Mr. Falconer and Isabel were alone. He approached her; she felt rather than saw that he was at her side, and scarcely breathed with agitated expectation.

"You suffer for me," he said gently, "and dear as your sympathy is, I am grieved at your suffering. Let me remind you that I am not without consolation; that life cannot be all joyless to the Christian, who sees in its least attractive aspect the lineaments of Divine love, and to whom it ever presents a high and holy hope."

"Here is the steamboat!" cried Mr. Elliot from the piazza.

"And here are the ladies!" responded Mrs. Elliot from the stairs which she was descending with Grace.

"Farewell!—Peace be with you?" whispered Mr. Falconer.

One moment's clasp of the hand, one glance long remembered by each—and they had parted.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Thy joys
Are placed in trifles, fashions, follies, toys;
Thou hast sought pleasure in the world around
That in thine own pure bosom should be found."
Crabbe.

"From the grape thou hast shaken the delicate blue,
What you've touch'd, you may take—pretty waltzer, adieu!"

Mrs. Elliot did not send out her invitations, for Mr. Falconer's departure had wholly changed her plans. Instead of spending the summer at her country-seat, as she had intended, she resolved to go to Saratoga. There, Grace would be diverted, her attention would be drawn from the past, and she would forget Mr. Falconer, perhaps replace him by another, less insensible to her charms. Isabel too was looking ill; she moved languidly, had lost her spirits and appetite, and evidently wanted change. But to Mrs. Elliot's surprise, when the change to Saratoga was proposed, Isabel declined being one of the party, entreated to be left at home with her uncle, and urged her wishes so strongly, and even vehemently, that she gained Mr. Elliot's permission to do as she pleased.

For a week Mr. Elliot's household was kept in all the bustle of preparation, for the projected gayeties of Mrs. Elliot and Grace. Isabel readily gave her assistance, when assured that she would not be required to participate in them; yet in the midst of her generous labors, she looked with surprise upon Grace, who now exhibited all the ardor of expectancy, wondering how one who loved

Mr. Falconer could turn so quickly from the contemplation of his high qualities, from sympathy with his noble pursuits and lofty aims, to the graceful follies of fashion.

"Good-by, Isabel! you are a silly child to stay and mope here, when you might be a belle at Saratoga."

"Good-by, Bella! I think you were very unkind, not to come with me; you know I can only be half happy without you."

Such were the parting salutations of Mrs. Elliot and Grace, to which Isabel listened without the slightest desire to recall her decision. She was alone, and she breathed more freely. Her very thoughts had seemed constrained in the presence of those who had so little understood or so little regarded her feelings. The ease with which Grace turned to other objects for relief from the memory of that impression, to which she had sacrificed the dearest hope of her life, could not but make her sacrifice more bitter. While another's suspicion of its costliness would have been inexpressibly painful to her delicacy, she was yet, with an inconsistency too common to our perverted nature, both piqued and grieved by the utter unconsciousness of her sufferings manifested by all around her. With her quiet, unobservant uncle for her only companion, she now yielded herself without restraint to her memories of the past, and her regret for the present. These were all that life seemed to contain for her. Future she had none. Alas for human nature! how often is it thus! We meet some great and unexpected trial—our sinking spirits cry in their agony to Heaven for help, and we receive it. In the strength of the Holy One we conquer, and then, forgetful that the fount from whence we have drawn is inexhaustible, we turn again to the broken cisterns of earth, and we sink, faint, despairing, and ready to die.

Fortunately for Isabel, before this abandonment to her

feelings had made fatal inroads on her physical or mental constitution, Mrs. Stuart, having heard of her loneliness, came to make her a visit. It was soon evident to her, who looked with a loving eye into the hearts of all around her, that her young friend was not as she had been.

"How have you employed yourself since your aunt and cousin left you?" she asked of Isabel, the morning after her arrival.

"I do not know," she answered confusedly, "I—I have done very little."

"Have you read the books I selected from the library for you when your uncle was in the city last?"

"I have not."

"I hope you have not forgotten your promise to gather and press some of the summer flowers for Walter's herbarium. I have some hope, from a passage in his last letter, that he means to come for them himself this autumn."

"I have not pressed any yet."

"Then we will do it together. Suppose we begin to-day; I want to make a visit to Annie Linden, and we can take a basket with us, and bring back some flowers."

This was but one of many kind devices by which Mrs. Stuart contrived to draw Isabel out of herself, to communicate to each passing hour some interest, and provide for it some healthful employment. But she felt that the two weeks allotted to her visit was an insufficient time to fix the bond of habit on the soul of her friend, and she feared that when the stimulus of her society was withdrawn, the influences from which she had been striving to rescue her would again triumph. Of the nature of these influences, whatever she might suspect, she had no certain knowledge, and she could not therefore by any direct appeal to higher principles, arouse Isabel to struggle with and to subdue them.

The day before that appointed for Mrs. Stuart's return, found the friends, at set of sun, within a room overlooking the river, whose placid bosom glowed with the rich gold and crimson of the western sky. All abroad was tranquil, but troubled thoughts were in the hearts of those who gazed upon the scene.

"I grieve to leave all this beauty and sweetness for the impure air, and the close, hot streets of the city," said Mrs. Stuart.

"And I grieve to part with you. I fear—" Isabel paused.

"Why do you hesitate, Isabel! If you regard me as a friend, you should speak your fears as well as your hopes to me."

"I fear that when you are gone, I shall become again as idle and listless as you found me."

"Not if you are convinced that such idleness is wrong. If I have aroused you to this conviction, I have done all for you that a friend can do, the rest must be your own work."

There was a long pause, and when Isabel spoke again it was in low and faltering accents.

"Are there not circumstances, feelings, under whose influence we become—all things become too indifferent to us to excite us to action?"

"There are such circumstances, doubtless, occurring in the life of all: but where is our Christian faith if we yield to their influence?"

"How can we resist it? When we have no hope, no desire—for what shall we act?"

"No hope! no desire!—can this ever be to the Christian? What earthly circumstances can efface from his spirit the hope of a blessed immortality, the desire to be moulded into the 'beauty of holiness?'"

"Life seems so long when we suffer," said Isabel, feeling perhaps that the hope of which Mrs. Stuart had spoken was placed by this impression at a greater distance from us, and that its power was consequently diminished.

"Life is long indeed, but only when we take into view our whole existence. That part of it which is spent on earth would seem very short to us if we regarded it as the school of Heaven, the place in which our powers are disciplined for their appropriate spheres. Ah, Isabel! were such a view of life habitual with us, how differently we should regard its events—with what simple, childlike trust we should yield ourselves to our Father's discipline!"

Tears filled the eyes of Isabel, and hiding them for an instant on Mrs. Stuart's shoulder, she murmured, "I wish I could be always with you, that I might learn to think and feel thus."

"That must be taught of Heaven, dear Isabel; but remember, it is not to the inactive, but to him who does the will of our Heavenly Father, that He promises His teachings. I should be rejoiced to remain with you, while your aunt and Grace are away, but that is impossible, and I cannot ask you to go with me to the city at this season."

"I do not care for seasons; I should be delighted to go."

Mr. Elliot, on being consulted, was no less pleased with this arrangement than Isabel, as he said he had business requiring his presence in the city, which he had hitherto neglected, because he did not like to leave her alone. His house in town having been accordingly prepared for their reception by his orders, Isabel and he returned to it about the middle of August. To the letter announcing their removal, Mrs. Elliot replied as follows:

Saratoga, Aug. 20th, 1828.

My dear Isabel,

I am really astonished at your uncle, for permitting you to do any thing so wild as returning to the city in August —the very worst season of all others. I have written to him to-day, advising that he should put you under the care of some person coming to Saratoga as soon as possible after receiving my letter. He will find no difficulty, I think, in obtaining a proper escort for you.

Grace is delighted here, and well she may be. She has attracted the most unbounded admiration. "La belle Georgiane," she is called by—whom do you think?—our old acquaintance, the Marquis de Villeneuve, who, having made the tour of the United States, and spent the last winter in the West Indies, is now here with the intention of embarking for France from New York in the autumn. But to return to "La belle Georgiane,"—the admiration of the Marquis was enough to put the stamp of fashion on her beauty, and not the less because some people misunderstood the term, and supposed it meant a Circassian.

Grace has just come in to say that she is going to ride with the Marquis de Villeneuve. He is quite devoted to her. I shall not be surprised if you are one day cousin to a Marquise. How fortunate that her penchant for Mr. F—— should have passed off so harmlessly! Good-by. I must go and see her dressed. She is to wear for the first time a riding-cap and habit, which I received from the city for her yesterday. Should you come, you had better order a cap of the same fashion from Mrs. Childs, and a habit from Mad. Smatz.

Love to Mrs. S—. In great haste.

Your affectionate aunt,

M. Elliot.

The success of Grace in the fashionable world did not tempt Isabel from her seclusion. She felt that if happiness were again to be hers, it must be from the cultivation of high and spiritual views of life, such views as might be attained in devout contemplation of its Author, its aims, its end, or in the fostering of its gentle charities, and the practice of its earnest duties; not from a participation in its vain shows, its heartless pageants, and frivolous dissipations. These last may heal the wounds of vanity, but over the deeper emotions of the heart they are powerless. In accordance with these impressions she wrote to her aunt, repeating her desire to remain at home with Mr. Elliot, but before the letter was sent circumstances occurred which caused a change in her decisions.

"I have brought a visiter with me, who will insure me a welcome," said Mrs. Stuart, as with more than usual cheerfulness of looks and movement, she entered the parlor in which Isabel and Mr. Elliot were at breakfast.

Glancing quickly through the open door, with a feeling of disappointment for which she blushed, Isabel saw Walter Stuart and her cousin Marion approaching. They had arrived in New-York late in the preceding night, and Marion, supposing his family all in the country, had gone to Mrs. Stuart's with Walter.

"And so my mother and Grace are at Saratoga. I think the wisest thing we can do is to join them there. What say you to it, Walter?" exclaimed Marion, after the first greetings were over.

"I have been already proposing it to my mother," replied Captain Stuart, "my decision must wait on hers. I cannot afford to spend an hour of my six weeks' leave of absence away from her."

Tears of grateful joy rushed to Mrs. Stuart's eyes, as she cast them on her son; they were still glistening when

she turned them on Isabel to ask, "Will you go with us?"

"Certainly she will," said Mr. Elliot; "I will lay my commands on her, if they are necessary; she must not mope here with a dull old uncle, while you are all enjoying yourselves."

"And will you not go with us, sir?" asked Marion of his father.

"No, my son; business first you know: but you will not be long gone; it will soon be getting too cold for Saratoga, and your mother and Grace will be glad to return with you."

Saratoga! Brilliant Saratoga! to lend splendor to whose circle, stars of the Northern and Southern hemispheres, forgetful of all natural divisions, peculiar institutions and the like, shine forth in friendly union, side by side. It was the last week of August, and anticipating an early termination to their butterfly existence, from the chill breezes of September, belles and beaux determined to make the most of what remained to them of pleasure, dressed, and danced, and flirted as they had never done before. Balls were more frequent, and each ball more brilliant than the last. Mrs. Elliot abandoned herself to the interests of Grace, with what she considered the most generous regard; though the generosity might, in the opinion of some, be greatly diminished by the pleasure with which she anticipated a visit to Paris, as the guest of her niece, the Marquise de Villeneuve. Whatever was the character of her motives, she certainly spared neither trouble nor expense in decorating the beautiful person of Grace, and in aiding her by her greater experience of life, her more extended knowledge of men and manners, in achieving for herself so high a destiny. Mrs. Elliot had been, at first, confident of success. The Marquis was so attentive, and looked so ad-

miringly, who could doubt that he loved? But beyond this Cape of Good Hope, he had not advanced one step. He still danced, and walked, and rode with Grace oftener than with any other lady, sang only to her guitar, taught her amatory duets with most expressive looks and tones, and gave her lessons in écarté; but with all this he mingled not one word of serious love-making. There was a certain tone which marked to all, and to none more plainly than to Mrs. Elliot and Grace, that the Marquis de Villeneuve was still his own master. Grace became piqued at this continued resistance of her power, and entered with greater spirit and interest into her aunt's designs.

"The result only, my dear Grace, can prove to the world whether the Marquis really admires you, as I believe, or whether he is only playing with you, as I overheard that spiteful Mrs. Smith telling a lady."

"But the world can know nothing of the result, unless I admire him too."

"That will be taken as a matter of course. Young ladies seldom fail to admire a gentleman of pleasing person and agreeable manners, who adds to these recommendations the title of Marquis, and an income of, they say, twenty thousand dollars a year."

"But I really do not think him either very handsome or very agreeable."

"Not *very*, perhaps; but you will take the Marquisate and twenty thousand a year, in the place of that little word."

"Indeed, I have no such intention, aunt. The Marquis may do very well as a partner in a ball-room, but for life —excuse me," and with a light laugh, Grace turned to leave the room.

"Come back, Grace, and listen to me," cried Mrs. Elliot.

Grace returned as gayly as she had gone.

"You have been very wrong, Grace, very indiscreet," said her aunt gravely, "if you have indeed, as you say, no design to accept the Marquis, to receive such attentions from him as you have done; such very particular attentions. Every one believes you attached to him."

"Then every one has made a great mistake, which I must take some trouble to correct. Attached to the Marquis de Villeneuve! Mistake, indeed!" and the smile on the lip of Grace gave place to a pout scarcely less becoming.

"And how, pray, do you expect to correct the mistake?" asked Mrs. Elliot.

"By declining all his attentions, general and particular, for the future."

"And so be set down as a disappointed young lady, acting from pique."

Grace was silent for a moment, and when she spoke again, it was no longer in such light accents as she had hitherto done. "It seems I am to be equally blamed, whether I receive or decline his attentions; I am sure, I do not see what people would have me to do."

"You have been very imprudent, certainly, Grace, in going so far with one whom you never intended to marry. To retreat now is impossible."

"You do not mean that I must marry him," exclaimed Grace, in consternation.

"I am not at all sure that such a termination of the dilemma will be possible for you; Mrs. Smith may be right after all. What I mean is, that if you would maintain your position in society, and avoid ridicule, you must now proceed in your present course, till you bring the Marquis to offer himself; then you may reject or accept him, as you please."

"Would it be quite right, quite honorable," said Grace, hesitatingly, "to reject him then?"

"That you must decide for yourself; all I would impress on you is, that nothing is so fatal to a woman's success in life as the reputation of having been slighted."

The color which flushed the brow of Grace, showed that Mr. Falconer was not quite forgotten.

"There is one comfort, Grace," said Mrs. Elliot, rising, as if the conference were at an end, "there is little danger of any tragic termination to the Marquis. I do not think he will break his heart, act as you will; and for yourself, I repeat to you, for caprice, injustice, inconstancy, for every thing short of crime, the world readily forgives a woman; these qualities seem sometimes, in the estimation of men, even to add piquancy to her charms, but she must be a bolder dame than I, who could risk the laugh that follows one on whom rests the least suspicion of having been deceived and deserted."

Again the blood rushed to the very temples of Grace, and with a laugh, which sounded not quite natural, she exclaimed, "Deceived! not much danger of that, I think."

"I hope not, nothing would give me greater delight than to be able to insinuate gently to that Mrs. Smith, that the Marquis had made you an offer."

Grace silently vowed that nothing should be wanting on her part to accomplish so desirable an object. Never had her toilette received so much attention, as on the evening succeeding this conversation, and never had attention been crowned with more complete success. Anticipated triumph sparkled in her eyes, glowed in her cheeks, and wreathed her lips with smiles, as she entered the brilliantly lighted ball-room, accompanied by her still beautiful and always graceful aunt, Mrs. Elliot. The Marquis de Villeneuve came forward to meet them, conducted them to

pleasant seats, and hovered about Grace with more than usual *empressement* in his gallantry; yet, though she was led from his side again and again by other partners, he did not ask her to dance. When Grace was dancing, and she could not therefore be suspected of manœuvring for her, Mrs. Elliot asked, with seeming carelessness, "Do not you intend dancing this evening, Monsieur de Villeneuve? There is room for another cotillion on the floor, and yonder is one of the prettiest girls at Saratoga sitting still."

The Marquis raised his glass, gazed long at the lady indicated, then lowering it, and turning to Mrs. Elliot, exclaimed, "Very pretty, very pretty indeed, but she wants style, fashion."

"Nevertheless she dances well, I assure you."

"It may be, but she does not *valse*, I am sure, and I am tired of all these dances without character. The American ladies are charming, very charming, *mais un peu prudes*. Pardon my French: I could not be so bold to say it in English."

"I will not permit you to say it in any language, of all American ladies."

The Marquis shrugged his shoulders, with a doubtful smile.

"Come, confess, that is too sweeping a censure," said Mrs. Elliot. "Except—"

"Whom? You shall make the list, and I will subscribe it—that is to say, if I can."

"Well, first on the list I will write, myself."

The Marquis bowed. "We have a proverb that says, '*les présens ont toujours raison.*'"

"My niece, Miss Elliot—"

"Is perfection in America, or if she have any faults, she makes us in love with them; but in Paris—pardon me

—I have no right to speak so—I was so interested, I forgot—"

"Pray make no apologies for what I am so desirous to hear. So Grace would not be admired in Paris."

"I did not say that; she could not help to be admired, but when they find she did not *valse*, because she thinks it an impropriety, it would take all her beauty to make her excuse."

"Has she ever refused to waltz with *you?*" asked Mrs. Elliot, significantly.

"There was something in her manner when I spoke of waltzing, which made me not dare to ask her."

"We have proverbs as well as you, and one of them is, 'Faint heart never won fair lady.'"

"I thank you," said the Marquis, bowing, "I will not be faint heart any more."

Grace was soon seen returning to her aunt. Mrs. Elliot advanced to meet her.

"My dear Grace," she exclaimed, "how warm you look! Pray, Mr. Howard, get her a glass of lemonade. Monsieur de Villeneuve, will you be so kind as to ask Mrs. Emmet for Miss Elliot's fan; I lent it to her a moment since. Ah! yonder she is, in the other room."

The gentlemen bowed and departed, and Mrs. Elliot was at liberty to whisper to Grace, "The Marquis is going to ask you to waltz, and you must not refuse."

"Oh, aunt!"

"He has acknowledged to me that this prudery, as he considers it, is your only fault in his eyes; but that this quite unfits you for Paris: so, you see, every thing depends on your overcoming it. By the by, he admires Miss Danforth very much, and if you refuse, he will not, I suspect, be long without a partner. Just look at that spiteful Mrs. Smith, how she is whispering and laugh-

ing. Ah, Marquis! you have brought the fan. Thank you."

"Permit me to use it." And leaning over the back of the *chaise longue* on which Grace was seated, the Marquis flourished her fan with a truly Parisian air.

"I am quite interested," he said, "in removing all ill effects from your last dance; you are not engaged for another, I hope."

"No." The voice of Grace faltered slightly.

"Will you permit me to waltz with you? Your aunt has given me courage to ask you."

Grace bowed, and the Marquis left her to give the necessary directions. Nature was struggling with art in the mind of Grace, and as Monsieur de Villeneuve returned to her side, the color went and came in her cheek, and her eyes fell beneath his, which had somewhat of triumph in their glance. He touched her hand; it trembled; but her aunt whispered in her ear, and she rose and took a step forward. His arm was around her; one hand clasped hers, the other was pressed to her throbbing heart. Let not Grace sink too low in the opinion of the fashionable reader, when we record that for one moment Nature triumphed, and that, withdrawing from the half embrace, she turned from him. At her other side stood a tall and manly form in a military undress; she raised her eyes to his face, and they rested on the calm, grave features of Captain Stuart. A start of surprise, an exclamation, another hurried glance, and the hand of Grace was clasped in that of her cousin Marion. Affectionate greetings, animated inquiries and explanations followed. Mrs. Elliot and Grace would have gone at once to Isabel, who had remained with Mrs. Stuart, pleading that she was too much fatigued to dress for a ball-room, but the Marquis arrested their steps. "I flattered myself—" he began.

Grace glanced at Captain Stuart, and interrupted him, saying, "Aunt, if Captain Stuart will show you the way, I will get Marion to wait for me till I have fulfilled my engagement with Monsieur de Villeneuve, and after that I will join you."

No objection was made to this proposal, and Grace, who had lost all other fear in that of Walter Stuart's disapproval, only waited till he had withdrawn, to resume the position from which she had so lately extricated herself, and was soon moving in the graceful circles of the waltz. It was a favorite dance with her, and one which she often practised with Isabel for her partner. She had now in the Marquis de Villeneuve one far more capable of sustaining and guiding her in its dizzying mazes. Slowly, with a gentle, tranquil grace, they commenced, but each time they completed the circuit of the room, the music grew quicker, and faster and faster whirled the flying pair. At length they paused, and Grace, exhausted, dizzy, bewildered, would have sunk to the floor, had not the Marquis supported her, and borne rather than led her to a sofa.

"Dear Grace, I never saw you waltz so well!" exclaimed Mrs. Elliot's voice at her side. She looked up, and met what seemed to her conscious heart a reproving glance from her aunt's attendant, Captain Stuart. Involuntarily she covered her face with her hand, and sank back upon the cushions which Monsieur de Villeneuve had with officious gallantry arranged for her.

Poor Grace! she was beginning to feel some of the difficulties of his course, who adopts as a guiding star the varying opinions of men rather than the unchanging and eternal principles of right.

uality, a purity, which I could have worshipped; and yet a timidity, a clinging tenderness, a sensitive delicacy, which appealed constantly to man's strength and courage to shield her from every approach of harm. Such had been my dreams of woman; a being to be cherished and guarded with the tenderness which we give to the feeble and the helpless, yet one by sympathy with whom our higher natures should be cultivated, till purified and spiritualized we should rise, through her, to the communion of angels. Every day my interest in Grace became greater. Already I trembled for the influence which Mrs. Elliot would exert over her. How gladly would I have snatched her from that influence! but she was a child and an heiress; it was not to be thought of, and I left her. I am not one to indulge in day-dreams, and in leaving Grace Elliot I resolutely relinquished every hope, and silenced every thought which could connect me with her in the future. Still she remained the fairest embodiment of my ideal of woman, and when I found myself about to return, and learned that she was still unmarried, still disengaged, I set free my imprisoned thoughts and hopes, and they flew to her. I cannot describe to you with what anxiety I anticipated our meeting. I believed that I should see in a moment whether the bright gem of her soul had been dimmed, its purity sullied, by earthly shadow. I longed, yet dreaded, to hear your opinion of her; drank in eagerly every word which referred to her, and yet would not have asked a question for worlds. Will you believe that I could be so blind as not to recognise in such feelings—love. I said to myself, if she be unchanged, I shall love her. Alas! I loved already, and the moment that showed her to me in the arms—. Oh, mother! what do they deserve, who pervert and mislead an angel?"

Never had Mrs. Stuart seen her calm, self-controlled son

so moved. She had no hope, no consolation to offer, and she was silent, but she laid her hand tenderly in his, that he might be reminded that love, warm, true and pure, was still his. He pressed her hand, but, almost instantly relinquishing it, said, "How beautiful she was this morning in her humility and gentleness—looking as if she were ready to cast herself on the hearts of her friends, and plead for forgiveness, even before she was accused. And of what can she be accused? Only, as far as I have yet seen and heard, of too much pliability of nature, too much readiness to believe that those she loves can do no wrong. Have you any thing else to reproach her with?" and the lover, inconsistent as lovers ever are, turned with almost an angry expression to his mother, forgetful apparently of all which had caused his coldness and gravity in the morning.

Mrs. Stuart met his eyes with a look so gentle, so sympathizing, that in an instant he exclaimed, "Pardon me, my mother! I am ashamed that any thing should move me thus; but I will be calm—only tell me frankly whatever you have seen to condemn in *her*."

Walter was unwilling to associate the name he had so long loved with such a request.

"I will, Walter," said Mrs. Stuart, "though my frankness must give you pain—and yet I have nothing to say of Grace Elliot, which in the opinion of the world would be accounted matter of blame. She is a creature to be admired, to be loved, but—ah, Walter!—not trusted."

"And wherefore?"

"Because she is emphatically, one who 'loves the praise of man more than the praise of God;' because though capable of strong affections, the desire to please, to win the heartless plaudits of the crowd, to see herself the idol of the hour, would make her sin even against these. Vanity

is her ruling passion; her aim, to please, not the heart-searching God, but man, who sees only the outward act. In a word, her whole life is an effort, not to BE, but to SEEM."

"Then is her whole life a lie!"

Mrs. Stuart was silent.

Captain Stuart rose from his chair and walked with folded arms to the window, at which he stood long, with his face averted from his mother. Suddenly he turned around, left the room quickly, and rushed with rapid steps down stairs. Mrs. Stuart approached the window, and looked to see what had thus aroused him. Three gayly caparisoned horses stood on the turf beneath. On one of them Grace Elliot was already seated. Her companions, Marion Elliot and the Marquis de Villeneuve, were not yet mounted, and the liveried servant of the latter still held the reins of her horse, which moved uneasily from side to side, as if impatient of control. Marion was near her, but, as usual, heedless of all, save his own gay thoughts and words, when Walter Stuart approached and said to her, "Your horse seems too unquiet for a lady's management, Miss Elliot,—are you acquainted with him?"

"The Marquis de Villeneuve is, and he assures me he is perfectly safe."

The words had scarcely left the lips of Grace, before she repented their cold, scant courtesy, which seemed to reject his first expression of interest. He could not know that it was received thus because it was the first. She would have added something more gracious, but, with a silent bow, he had already turned away. He paused, however, beside Marion to say to him, "I do not like the horse Miss Elliot rides, Marion. Be watchful of his movements, and advise her to keep a tight rein."

The party moved off, and Captain Stuart watched them

from the piazza till they were out of sight, when he left the house on foot, and by a different road from that which they had taken. Striding on with that rapid motion in which we sometimes seek relief from an excited mind, he had advanced nearly, if not quite, two miles, when the quick striking of a horse's hoofs upon a hard surface arrested his attention. The sounds seemed approaching him, yet there was no object in sight. A wood on his right hand separated him from another road which intersected the one he was pursuing, at an acute angle, about fifty yards in advance of the spot on which he now stood. Hurrying to this spot, he had scarcely braced himself to meet the shock he foresaw, when the white horse on which Grace had ridden came rushing on. The path on which he came was narrow, the woods on either side close, and sheering slightly to one side, he rose high in the air, to overleap the barrier which Captain Stuart presented to his progress; but the reins were in his powerful hand, and though the excited animal reared and plunged furiously, to the imminent peril of his life and limbs, he would not loose his hold, till he had wound his other arm around the passive Grace, and lifted her from the saddle. The horse sped on, and she lay conscious, yet helpless, pale and trembling in his arms, while he poured out his thanks to Heaven for her safety, and almost in the same breath conjured her to tell him that she was unhurt. For many minutes, Grace could not utter a word, she could only feel that in those arms she was safe, and so she lay with closed eyes, and colorless cheeks, only the light, scarce perceptible breath, and a quick shiver, which now and then passed over her form, marking that she was in life. Captain Stuart had never before seen the influence of terror on a delicate woman, and the appearance of Grace inspired him with the wildest apprehensions. He became every moment more anxious.

"This terror will kill her," he exclaimed. "You are safe now, Miss Elliot. She does not hear me. What can I do for her?—Speak to me, Grace—dear Grace—oh how dear!" and with tenderness excited to an uncontrollable degree by his alarm, he drew her closer to his bosom, and bending lower and still lower, touched her forehead with his lips. Slight as was the touch its effect was electrical; the blood rushed wildly to the very temples of Grace, and crimsoned even the tips of her slender fingers; her eyelids trembled as if about to unclose, and a faint smile rose to her lip.

"Grace, you hear me, and you do not repulse me!" cried Walter Stuart, no longer master of himself. Grace answered not, but she nestled closer to his side, and hid her face on his shoulder. At that instant, voices were heard approaching, and starting from her attitude of repose, Grace withdrew from the arm that had hitherto supported her. The voices were those of a neighboring farmer and Marion Elliot.

When Grace Elliot's horse, terrified by the sudden shouts of some boys at play in a neighboring field, dashed off, the Marquis de Villeneuve put spurs to his own and followed, —a proceeding which only increased her danger, as her horse was urged to fiercer efforts to outstrip his pursuer. Fortunately, this did not last long. The Marquis was a timid rider and soon found himself left behind in the race. Compelled to pause, he looked around for Marion, and saw him urging his horse to his utmost speed on another road. In moments such as this the supremacy of nature asserts itself, and the man of superior powers becomes the leader.

The Marquis de Villeneuve followed Marion Elliot unquestioningly, blindly, not knowing that this road had been chosen by him because, marking with the observant eye of a military man the country over which he passed, he

saw that it must intersect that down which Grace had been borne with such frantic haste. Before reaching the point of intersection, Marion, who had far outridden the Marquis, met the farmer we have named. From him he learned that a white horse bearing a lady's saddle had lately passed him. Guided by the farmer, he turned in the direction from which the horse had come, and was soon standing beside Grace and Walter Stuart.

"My dear Grace!" he exclaimed, throwing himself from his saddle as he came near, "God be thanked that I see you again alive!—and unhurt, I hope?"

"I believe so," said Grace, extending her hand to him with a faint smile, "but I can think of nothing yet except my terror, and my deliverance."

"Deliverance indeed!—and what good angel brought you here, Walter?"

"My good angel. Oh, Marion! if he had not come!" Grace paused, overcome by her emotions. She trembled violently, and covering her face with her hands, burst into tears.

"Marion, cannot you arrange with your guide some plan for taking your cousin home? Perhaps he has a carriage of some sort; see, Marion."

Even while speaking to Marion, Walter Stuart had passed his arm again around the weeping and trembling Grace, and when her cousin returned to the farmer, who had remained on his horse at some distance from the party, he soothed her with the tenderest words and gentlest accents that love could suggest.

"Let me weep," cried Grace, "it does me good."

"Then weep here, beloved."

He drew her gently to him, and laid her head tenderly upon his shoulder, and she wept there, soft, balmy, happy tears, such as a trusting child sheds on a mother's bosom.

Has life in reserve for either, another hour of such deep, pure, untroubled joy?

"Walter," exclaimed Marion, returning to them after having dispatched the farmer for his wagon, "you are a generous fellow, never to remind us that you cautioned us against that horse."

As he spoke, Marion clasped the hand which hung at Captain Stuart's side. He shrank from the clasp and turned pale, though no sound escaped his lips.

"You are hurt," cried Grace, attempting to withdraw herself.

"Rest quietly, dearest," and he held her clasped in the other arm; "you tremble still—you cannot support yourself, and I am not much hurt, though I cannot stand such a bear-like grasp as Marion's."

The wagon arrived, and they were soon at the Hotel, to the great relief of the Marquis de Villeneuve, who, after wandering hither and thither, bewildered by crossing roads and confused tracks, had just returned mortified and desponding. Breaking away in the midst of his congratulations and compliments, Walter Stuart sought the master of the house. "Is there a physician or surgeon here?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; quite a celebrated surgeon, from somewhere south."

"Ask him to come to Captain Stuart's room—number thirty-eight. Say nothing to any one else about it; but when Lieutenant Elliot comes in, send him to me."

"What must be done with this, Doctor," asked Walter Stuart as he raised his injured arm, from which he had already ripped the coat sleeve, and thrown back the shirt. The surgeon felt it; moved it. "Set it, to be sure, sir; your arm is broken. How was it done?"

"By the kick of a horse."

The arm was set before any one, except Lieutenant Elliot and the surgeon, were aware of the injury. It was several days before Walter Stuart could exchange his *robe de chambre* for a coat. During those days he did not appear in the public rooms. When he was next seen there, Grace Elliot leaned upon his arm, his betrothed; and none who saw the proud light in his eye could suppose that one tone of his mother's warning voice lingered in his heart, making discord with the glad music of his love. Urged on by the force of circumstances, he had pledged his faith to Grace, and won from her the acknowledgment of reciprocal tenderness more hastily than his unimpassioned reason would have counselled, but he was not one to turn from the joyous and fair-seeming present, to look with regret upon the past, or with timid apprehension on the future.

"She is your daughter now, dear mother, to be *guided* and *counselled*, as well as loved, for my sake," he had said, in announcing his engagement to his mother. If this had been intended as an allusion to their late conversation, it was the only allusion ever made by him. And Mrs. Stuart found it easy to love and to guide one, whose manners towards her were marked by the most winning gentleness and deference, and who seemed to desire to learn Walter's wishes and tastes, only that she might mould herself upon them.

To Mrs. Elliot, Grace had been too timid to communicate her engagement. She had delegated the task to Walter, with an almost instinctive consciousness that he would not be welcomed as the bearer of good tidings. To Isabel, on the contrary, she flew herself, and in all the glow of her first glad triumph, amidst tears, and smiles, and blushes, told her joy. Every other emotion in Isabel was lost in surprise.

"You are engaged to Captain Stuart!" she exclaimed: "how can that be? What has become of ——" She hesitated, and Grace exclaimed, "Of the Marquis? Oh, poor Marquis! You never could have believed that I cared any thing for him."

"No; but there was another, a very different person, Grace, to whom I thought—you said you were attached."

"You mean Mr. Falconer," said Grace, blushing yet more deeply, and turning her face away from Isabel's intense gaze. "You know I always thought he looked like Captain Stuart, and I am convinced now that that was the only cause of my—my interest in him. I never loved him, Isabel," and she threw her arms around Isabel's neck and hid her face on her shoulder. "I never loved any one but Walter Stuart, and to think that he should love me, Isabel! that he should have loved me, as he says he has done, from the first hour he saw me! Oh, dear Isabel! I am too—too happy; do you not rejoice with me?"

She raised her head and looked into Isabel's eyes with such a beaming countenance, such assurance of sympathy, that it was irresistible; it overcame even the sharp, arrowy thought, which had darted into Isabel's mind—"The happiness of my life, and, perhaps, of *his*, has been sacrificed to a fancy;" it thawed away the coldness, which, spite of all her efforts, had been gathering around her heart, and clasping her cousin in her arms, she kissed her with all the tenderness of former years, as she exclaimed, "I do indeed rejoice with you, my dear Grace. God grant that your happiness may never be less than at this moment."

CHAPTER X.

"There are hopes,
Promising well, and love-touch'd dreams for some,
And passions, many a wild one, and fair schemes
For gold and pleasure."
"What thrice-mock'd fools are we!"
Willis.

"THOU shalt not covet," saith the law of Wisdom and of Love, and foolish man, forgetful or disdainful of the heavenly precept, desires nothing so earnestly as the unattainable. Let another appropriate that on which he has looked with indifference, and it becomes at once valuable in his eyes. Thus was it with the Marquis de Villeneuve. Grace Elliot had been to him only a pretty girl, who might assist him in getting rid of some of the tediousness of time, but the rumor that she had been won by another, awakened a new feeling within him; she was now a beautiful heiress, whose conquest would have added to his éclât, even in Paris, and whose wealth would have enabled him to live there *en Prince*. But even these motives for desiring her favor were weak, compared with that which his vanity, stimulated by the appearance of rivalry and defeat, supplied. This influence was increased by many a silly jest from his companions at Saratoga; perhaps, by many a malicious taunt from those who had found themselves neglected for Grace. Mrs. Smith's laugh became as unpleasant to the Marquis as it had lately been to Mrs. Elliot. She was one of those who consider to be severe and to be witty as synonymous terms, and who

think any impertinence excusable, if it only wear the guise of a jest.

"Give that to Monsieur de Villeneuve, my dear," said she one day to a child, who was playing with a willow spray.

Monsieur de Villeneuve heard her, and asked, "And for what do you send me a rod, Mrs. Smith? What have I done?"

"Do you not see it is willow, Monsieur?" she inquired, with mock earnestness of tone.

"Willow, it is very pretty," said the Marquis, examining the leaves.

"Yes; I thought you would want a piece."

"You are very good, madame, to think of my wants, but I have not made any collection of the plants of this country."

"But you told me the other day, you were very careful to conform to the customs of every land you visited. Perhaps, however, you are not aware that it is a custom in America for rejected or forsaken swains to wear a wreath of willow around the hat."

The Marquis colored, bit his lip with anger, and stammered out confusedly, "I do not know, madame, what I have to do with such a custom."

"What customs are you and Mrs. Smith discussing, Monsieur de Villeneuve?" asked a silvery voice at his side. He turned, and met the smiling, pleasant face of Mrs. Elliot. While he hesitated, Mrs. Smith replied, "I have been telling the Marquis that the willow is the appropriate badge of discarded or forsaken lovers. Was I not right, Mrs. Elliot?"

"I really cannot tell, Mrs. Smith," said Mrs. Elliot, coldly; "having never had occasion to wear their badge myself, and as there is little danger that the Marquis de

Villeneuve will ever require it, the subject can scarcely interest him. Have you seen Lieutenant Elliot lately, monsieur? Ah! there he is with Miss Elton."

"Shall I speak to him for you?"

"I thank you; he was to walk with me, but as he seems more pleasantly engaged—"

"Permit me to supply his place."

The petition was graciously accepted, and an hour after Mrs. Elliot might have been seen slowly approaching the house, leaning on the arm of the Marquis de Villeneuve, with whom she was conversing in low tones and with great apparent interest. As they were parting, the Marquis detained her to say, "Give me the least hope of success, and I will spare nothing of care to win her."

"I have told you my belief, I can only add the proverb I quoted to you once before, 'Faint heart never won fair lady.'"

"And I will tell you now, as I told you then, I will be faint heart no more."

That afternoon the Marquis de Villeneuve left Saratoga, and his departure seemed the signal for that of many others. Mrs. Elliot proposed a visit to Niagara, and her party readily consented to the proposal.

If ever the mere sense of existence can give delight, it is in breathing the elastic air and being fanned by the cool breezes of September, in the latitude of New York. Under such influences, the pale cheek of the invalid is tinged with the hue of health; the eyes dim with sorrow, or weary with watching, grow bright again; the heavy heart throws off for a time its burden, and feels the lost link of harmony between itself and the joyous earth and the bright heavens restored. Nor is it altogether a sensual delight to which this bright and balmy air ministers. Something of religious sentiment is often awakened in the unclogged and

joyous spirit, while the heart remains uncontrolled by religious principle,—a vague, inefficient, and unenduring, yet elevating sentiment, during whose brief reign love becomes less selfish and earthly joy calmer and deeper. Elevated by these influences, for a time, to a level with the nobler and purer spirit of her lover, Grace Elliot became every hour dearer to him. If such was the effect on her, of seeing the smiling face of Nature, what was it on Isabel, whose reverent heart had been accustomed "to rise from Nature up to Nature's God?" She had felt stifled, crushed, in the crowds of Saratoga. In its activity and gayety her outer life had participated, but her mirth had been a vain show in which her spirit shared not. Her inner life had seemed paralyzed, but now,

> "—— she felt in nature's broad,
> Full heart, her own was free,"

and it rose up serenely, even joyously, to the Divine source of life, and love, and beauty. She began to understand how much of enjoyment was still left to her. Self-accusing tears often dimmed her eyes, as she remembered how the disappointment of one ardent affection, one earnest desire had made her ready to cast from her as a valueless boon, the life in which so much of God was still to be found. The emotions which Niagara awakened, we attempt not to depict—as well attempt to describe Niagara itself.

October had already cast its many-colored robe over the woods and fields, when our party found themselves nearing the city. Its busy hum fell on their ears with varying effect. To Isabel it seemed a discordant note, spoiling the rich, heavenly harmony of nature; to Mrs. Stuart it was a call to the homely duties, in which dwell a beauty and a charm, perceived only by the earnest spirit; to Captain

Stuart a trumpet tone, bidding him, after a period of repose, buckle on his armor, and stand ready for combat; to Mrs. Elliot, and Grace, and Marion it was a light strain, inviting them to scenes of festivity and mirth. It is wonderful how much our characters are under the influence of the objects surrounding us. There are some, and Grace Elliot was of the number, who seem but the reflex image of those objects. Appreciating the lofty nature of Captain Stuart, she had welcomed her late emotions as raising her to his level, and more than once, as her throbbing heart and glistening eyes responded to his expressions of deep, and high, and holy thought, she had repeated to herself, with the conviction that she might appropriate the experience as her own,

> "And like the stain'd web in the sun,
> Grow pure, by being purely shone upon."

Once more in New York, and all this was as a dream, shadowy, evanescent. She honored and loved him still, but it was as the man whom men honored and obeyed, and whose homage would elevate her in the esteem of others. Her love was no longer a holy mystery, to be guarded from cold eyes; it was a jewelled crown to be worn as an ornament to her own beauty, and a badge of her power. Fatigued as she was on the evening of her arrival, she did not sleep till she had examined the cards left during their absence, and we fear Walter Stuart would have been little pleased, could he have seen the sparkle of her eyes as they rested on the name of the Marquis de Villeneuve. He did not see it, for he had attended his mother home, but the next morning he presented himself at Mr. Elliot's before the family had assembled for breakfast.

"Miss Elliot is in the breakfast-room, sir," said the servant who admitted him, and proceeding thither, he en-

tered unannounced. The morning was cold, and a fire had been kindled in this room, which was probably the attraction to Grace for resorting to it so early. She was seated on an ottoman, which she had drawn so near the fire as to permit her to rest her feet on the fender, while the morning paper served to screen her face from the heat. Her eyes were riveted upon its pages, and her thoughts must have been as intently engaged, for she heeded neither the opening of the door, nor the entrance of Captain Stuart. He stood for several seconds near her, gazing with tenderness, shadowed with somewhat of sadness, upon the beautiful head with its shower of golden ringlets, and the face so young, so tender and pure in its childlike beauty. Suddenly a flash of joy lit up the soft, dovelike eyes, and a smile parted the lovely lips. He bent down, and drawing her to his bosom, had touched those lips with his, before she knew of his presence. Why was it that in that moment of pleased surprise, even as she turned to hide her glad smile upon his shoulder, she crumpled with a nervous hand the paper she was reading, and threw it from her? Walter Stuart scarce observed that movement at the time, though he may have remembered it afterwards.

"To meet you thus alone, is a piece of good fortune I scarcely expected, Grace, though I wished it earnestly, for I am come to tell you what I would rather tell, and you, I think, would rather hear, without witnesses: nay, do not look so frightened, it is nothing very terrible, only that I must leave you sooner than I expected—to-day."

"To-day!"

Grace had sought to hide her smiles from him, but her already moistened eyes and quivering lips were turned to him without a thought. "To-day; leave me to-day!" she repeated, while he continued to gaze upon her with admiring tenderness.

"Yes, dearest, but I hope to return for a few days at least, before my leave of absence expires, even if I cannot get it prolonged; I wrote to Colonel Lee, last night, that if he could spare me, I would apply for an extension of it, and if I can help it, I will not, after this, leave my Grace at all, but remain with her till I am privileged to take her with me."

"But now, why do you leave me now, when you told me only yesterday that you had still three weeks of liberty?"

She drew closer to him as she spoke, and looked up so pleadingly in his face, that instead of answering her question, he said, while he kissed away the tears that hung upon her lashes, "Parting is such sweet sorrow, that I would we could part thus every day."

"Cruel Walter!" she exclaimed, starting from his arms, "you are only trying me. How could you do so?"

"You do not know me, Grace, or you would feel that to be impossible; I told you truly, I must leave you this afternoon. On my arrival last night, I received a letter from a brother officer who has got into a difficulty, from which he needs the aid of a friend to extricate him. My going may save life, and I must not hesitate. I hope, as I told you, to be able to return at least for a few days, before my leave of absence has expired."

"Oh! you will get your leave extended, will you not?"

"If I can with propriety. I would gladly be ever with my Grace."

"And yet you wished just now that you could part from me every day."

"One of love's inconsistencies, dearest; you know little of love if you do not understand it."

They were interrupted by the entrance of other members of the family, who were soon followed by the servants,

with breakfast. To Marion Elliot, Captain Stuart entered into a more detailed relation of the circumstances which compelled his departure. Two of his brother officers, hot-headed, though worthy men, had quarrelled; a duel, it was feared, would be the result; he had great influence with both parties, and hoped to be able to act as a mediator between them, if he could see them in time.

"You expect a renewal of your leave?" said Marion, inquiringly.

"I have written to Lee, to know if he can spare me. If he can, I shall apply for it, and request that the answer may be forwarded here. I empower you to open any communication that may arrive from the Department for me; so you will all know the result of my application, probably before I do."

He said *all*, but his eyes were turned on Grace.

"Where is the morning's paper?" asked Mrs. Elliot, of a servant. It was found, and by her direction handed to Marion, that he might see if there was any thing worth reading in it.

"Here is a speech of Daniel Webster's, shall I read that?"

"If you do, pray let it be to yourself."

"Well, here are what the editor calls 'pungent and sparkling remarks of Henry Clay,' shall I give you those?"

"Pray hand me the paper, Marion, if you cannot cater better for a lady's taste."

"Oh! I beg your pardon, here are the marriages and deaths; marriages, not a name I know among them; deaths,—Walter," he exclaimed, with sudden seriousness, "our old friend, Mr. Falconer, is dead."

"Mr. Falconer!" exclaimed Mrs. Elliot and Grace; but from Isabel no sound proceeded, and as Walter Stuart,

who sat opposite to her, raised his eyes to address Marion, he saw that every particle of color had faded from her face, leaving her very lips of an ashy paleness, while her hands were clenched upon the table before her, and her eyes were fastened with a wild stare upon Marion.

"Not Hubert Falconer," he hastened to say, "whom you know, but an uncle of his, a man seventy years old."

There was a quick, gasping sound from Isabel; she stretched out her hand towards the paper; but before she touched it—before any one but Walter Stuart had perceived the movement, she fell forward, with her face upon the table.

For a few minutes all was confusion and alarm. Marion lifted her in his arms and laid her upon a couch, where Mrs. Elliot deluged her with Cologne water, while Grace kissed her and wept over her by turns, scarcely hearing Walter Stuart's assurances that there was no danger—that she would soon be well again. Very soon, in truth, a faint tinge of color rose to her cheeks, and her eyelids quivered as if about to unclose; the next instant she opened her eyes suddenly, and turned them with a wild, sad expression upon those around her. They fell upon the newspaper which Marion had converted into a fan for her. A rapid change passed over her countenance, a sudden smile irradiating her features like a sunbeam, and murmuring, "It was so warm; but I am better now," she attempted to rise. Mrs. Elliot insisted, however, that she should remain for the present where she was, and too languid to contend, she lay down again. Marion drew his chair beside her couch, and promised to reward her for her submission, by reading all the really *feminine* items from his paper. A most extraordinary jumble of milliners' advertisements, elopements, fashionable *on dits*, and tragical occurrences followed, for most of which it would have been useless to

search any paper extant. At length he exclaimed, "Here is something to interest you, ladies. 'Private theatricals—It is rumored that a certain distinguished foreigner, who occupies a suite of apartments in one of our principal hotels, is about to introduce a new diversion into our fashionable circles. Workmen are said to be busily engaged in removing the partition between two of his rooms, and making such temporary arrangements as will convert them into a theatre, where a small but select company may witness the histrionic efforts of this gentleman, and those whom he may induce to aid him. More than one fair lady, if fame may be trusted, has already consented to tread the stage with him; but we are told that the bright, particular star, to whom these are but humble satellites, has yet to appear.'—What can it mean?" questioned Marion; "who is this distinguished foreigner? Can it be the Marquis de Villeneuve?" At that moment he caught Mrs. Elliot's meaning smile, and continued, "I believe in my soul it is the Marquis, and that my mother could tell me all about it, if she would. Grace, has the Marquis ever heard you recite? Only tell me, mother, if Grace is his bright, particular star."

"You should have been born on the other side of the Connecticut, you guess so well," was Mrs. Elliot's answer, as with a light laugh she passed from the room.

Grace ventured to glance at Captain Stuart. Could that cold, stern face be the same, from whose every feature had lately breathed such passionate tenderness? There was neither coldness nor sternness in his expostulation, when next he was alone with her.

"Grace, dear Grace, do not think it the dictate of jealous love, if I entreat you to have as little intercourse with this French fop as politeness will permit; I cannot endure that men should associate my gentle Grace—my own sweet

wife, as I hope soon to call her—with those who bow down before this little man with a great name; yet more painful would it be to me to have you feed his self-conceit, by even a passing fancy that you might have been his."

"You do not believe that," murmured Grace.

"No! no! heaven forbid that I should. Yet, Grace, I would give much, that I had never seen you in his—, that I had never seen that hateful waltz."

"I did not wish to waltz with him—indeed I did not; but my aunt—how could I help it? Pray do not speak to me of it again; you have forgiven me."

"You committed no fault against me then, Grace, for you had no obligation to me, and, however I might have disapproved, I had no right to resent; but I will not speak of it again, since it gives you such pain." He kissed off a tear from her cheek, and continued, "Only promise me now, that you will have nothing to do with these theatricals; the whole thing is distasteful to me. Will you promise?"

"I am sorry you cannot trust to my desire to please you, without binding me by a promise."

Her look, her tone, was reproachful; and she attempted to withdraw from his encircling arm; but he exclaimed, "I do! I do trust you, my beloved!" and the cloud vanished from her face, and she suffered him again to support her.

On the evening of this same day, when the tears which her first parting with her lover had drawn from Grace were scarce dry upon her cheeks, the Marquis de Villeneuve was announced. She heard the announcement while standing in an inner room, urging Marion to accompany her to Mrs. Stuart's.

"There is the Marquis," said Marion; "you must stay and see him."

"I do not wish to see Monsieur de Villeneuve."

"I believe in my heart Walter has forbidden you to receive him; he was always a little jealous about that waltz. Ah, poor Grace! I know he is a sad tyrant; I will give the Marquis a hint of it, and he will excuse you, I doubt not."

"Nonsense, Marion; what folly!"

Grace spoke with a trepidation which betrayed the fear she really felt that Marion in his mad humor might give the threatened hint. He saw it, and with a manlike love of power and its display, exclaimed, "If you would prove that my suspicion is wrong, come in the parlor with me, and receive the visit for which so many ladies would barter their sweetest smiles. Ah! you smile too; you are not quite an icicle, I perceive."

"Marion, you are incorrigible."

"So the ladies generally pronounce me, and therefore they let me do as I please."

Grace seemed to concur in the uselessness of opposition to her cousin, for she no longer resisted his efforts to lead her into the parlor in which the Marquis de Villeneuve was receiving the cordial greetings of Mrs. Elliot. The previous conversation, and a mischievous whisper of, "Don't be too gracious, or I'll report to Walter," from Marion, gave to the reception accorded him by Grace an air of embarrassment even more flattering than this cordiality.

Marion soon introduced the subject of the private theatricals, assuring the Marquis in somewhat hyperbolic terms, that though the paper had not named him, he was convinced he could not be wrong in attributing to him an idea so admirable in itself, and requiring such "splendor of liberality,"—we use his own words—in its execution.

"I am glad you are so pleased with it," said Monsieur de Villeneuve in reply, "but I must not take too much credit for myself; the idea was not all for me."

"Ah! to which of your friends then must we make our acknowledgments?"

"Miss Elliot," he said, "looks so unknowing, so determined she shall not know, that I am almost afraid to say it is to her."

"To me!" exclaimed Grace, actually starting with surprise.

"Why Grace! how sly you were, never to betray any knowledge of the matter this morning."

"I could not betray what did not exist," said Grace, with more energy than she usually exhibited, for she remembered that Walter Stuart had said the whole thing was distasteful to him.

"Do you not remember our conversation one evening, when you had recited for me at your aunt's request?" asked the Marquis. "You said then you would like so much to see the private theatricals, and I have said to myself you should see them, and so you have given me the idea."

Grace had never received a compliment so awkwardly—could she have forgotten her conversation with Captain Stuart in the morning, few things would have given her so much delight; but now—

"And I hope you will not refuse to aid us, you who have such a beautiful talent. All are waiting for you; nothing can be done, till you select the play, and choose your own part."

"Oh, no! no, monsieur, I cannot take any part in it; indeed I cannot."

"Do not say so—*mille pardons, mais*—excuse me, but you make me to speak French. I am so grieved, I have

no words in English to tell how much—the whole thing is finished if you do not take pity on us."

"Pray madame," to Mrs. Elliot. "Pray monsieur, plead for me."

"It is so new an idea to Grace, that it may well startle her a little at first. Suppose we leave her to think of it for a day or two."

"And you will plead for me?"

"I will—though I think it will not be needed; there is so much pleasure in what you propose."

"And you, monsieur," to Marion, "will you use for me your influence with Miss Elliot?"

"I will with pleasure, but I fear it will be useless."

"You think she is so determined?"

"I believe Captain Stuart has a particular distaste to private theatricals; has he not, Grace?" asked the mischievous Marion.

Grace colored, Mrs. Elliot frowned, and the Marquis, having remained silent for a moment, said, "You cannot mean that it is the custom in America for a gentleman to give the law; in France it is the ladies who rule always."

"Pray form no opinion of our customs from what Marion may say," exclaimed Mrs. Elliot.

"Mother! you are attacking me on my most impregnable point. I assure you, monsieur, I am the Chesterfield of our corps—a perfect master of the science of dress and address."

"I wish you would let your knowledge of the last appear more frequently," ejaculated Mrs. Elliot in an under tone.

"I will do any thing to oblige you, dear mother; and now, to begin, observe with what polished elegance I will offer Grace the escort for which she was pleading, when

the Marquis entered." He rose as he spoke, and approaching Grace with a very deferential manner, said, "It will give me great pleasure, Miss Elliot, to wait on you now. Monsieur de Villeneuve will excuse me for a few minutes, when he knows that I go to accompany you to Mrs. Stuart's —the mother of Captain Stuart, monsieur. So dear a duty—"

"Marion, you are very provoking; pray, go to Mrs. Stuart's yourself, and say to her that Grace would have come, but she has not been very well to-day, and I would not consent to it."

"I go," said Marion, bowing almost to his mother's feet, "for, born your slave, I live but to obey you."

With a perfect flourish of bows he left the room. When he returned, more than an hour afterwards, he passed the Marquis de Villeneuve in the hall, and on entering the parlor, found his mother and Grace at a table on which lay several volumes of the old English dramatists, and some more modern plays.

"Well, Grace, what play shall it be?" he asked playfully.

"If I had any thing to do with it," she replied, "it should be 'The Lady of Lyons,' for I have always admired that so much, that I can repeat almost all of Pauline's speeches, and what is a little strange, Monsieur de Villeneuve is nearly as much at home in Claude Melnotte."

Marion looked at his mother with a meaning smile, which met no reply on her impassive face. Had Grace really no suspicion that Monsieur de Villeneuve's remarkable familiarity with Claude Melnotte was the result of Mrs. Elliot's report of her predilection for Pauline?

CHAPTER XI.

"Look up! there is a small bright cloud,
Alone amid the skies!
So high, so pure, and so apart,
A woman's glory lies."

"Dread was the wo in the face so young."

E. B. Barrett.

GRACE had parleyed with the tempter, and though she still continued true in word and action to her lover's wishes, she was false to them at heart.

"I *cannot* take any part in your performance," she still said to the Marquis.

"I *ought* not, aunt, indeed I ought not, after all that Walter said," she still repeated to Mrs. Elliot; but to her own heart, she admitted that it was very hard to be denied so innocent a pleasure, one which she so much desired, and which she never again could hope to enjoy. Except when reading the letters full of generous and confiding tenderness which she daily received from Captain Stuart, or when replying to them, she was occupied wholly by one idea—Pauline. How well she could represent the fair Lady of Lyons in her youthful beauty; with what force of sympathy she could throw her whole soul into the part; what scope it would afford for the display of her talent for recitation! What an evening of triumph it would have been for her! such a public compliment from the Marquis! None could have doubted his admiration of her, who knew he had incurred such expense only to gratify her in a passing fancy.

Ah! but for Walter's strange notions, that evening would have been an epoch—a brilliant epoch in her life. She would have established herself indeed, "as a bright, particular star," in the world of intellect, as well as of fashion. And would he not have valued her more and loved her better when she had thus manifested her powers, when she had won the homage of the intellectual? He would have felt then, that she could sympathize with his own high thoughts, though she might be too timid to express that sympathy.

While feeling thus, it will be readily conjectured that the Marquis de Villeneuve was not an unwelcome visiter to Grace. He talked to her of the play, and its progress, for he had given out the other parts, and made all arrangements for its representation, on the condition that she should be at last prevailed on to appear as Pauline.

"It is impossible, monsieur, it is useless to speak of it," Grace would say with a laugh and a blush, at his persisting to make every thing depend upon her.

"Well! let me at least have the fancy, the illusion, as a reward for my devotion to your wish. It will be time enough when the day comes to give that up, and then our dresses will serve for *tableaux vivans* or a *bal de costumes*. Somehow we will have our amusement."

And so Grace went on in a pleasant but dangerous dream, studying, practising attitudes, rehearsing; yet declaring, and almost believing, that she would have nothing to do with the play. She had not resolution to say to Walter Stuart, "I think your demands unreasonable." She had not firmness to resist, in her devotion to him, the influence of others. She would seem to him delicate as his fastidious fancy, devoted as his wish; but she would also seem to others, the bright enchantress of the Marquis de Villeneuve; the first in talent, as in beauty. She might

be both these, if, conscious of her power, she had yet been willing to lay the offerings to her vanity on the altar of her love ; but to *seem* them both, to satisfy that restless desire of praise, which still cries, "Give, give," here was the difficulty—a difficulty which all must at some time encounter, who live for others, not for their own souls and for Heaven.

And while Grace was thus approaching a precipice, was there no kind hand near to arrest her progress? Mrs. Stuart's heart had opened to Walter's selected wife. She met the gentle and affectionate attentions of Grace with true and warm regard, and in the strength of that regard, she would not have hesitated to warn and counsel; but she suspected no danger, she knew nothing of the play ; she heard nothing of the Marquis de Villeneuve. Marion's laughing remonstrances were little heeded, they only served to familiarize Grace with the terrors which he threatened. She laughed so often with him at Walter's jealousy and Walter's anger, that she could scarcely regard them at last as very grave affairs. But there was one who saw all, heard all, and would have thrown herself between her and the evil she was tempting.

"Grace, I do not like that Marquis de Villeneuve," said Isabel one morning as she turned from the window, from which she had just seen him kiss his hand to them as he passed up Broadway with another gentleman.

"Don't you?" asked Grace, carelessly ; "that is ungrateful, Bella, for he admires you, though he acknowledges there is something about you which awes him."

Isabel colored. "It is the effect I would most like to produce upon him. I desire always to awe impertinence."

"But how has he been impertinent?"

"I think there is impertinence in the confidence with which he approaches you."

"I do not perceive it."

The tones of Grace showed her not well pleased at the suggestion, and Isabel remained a long time silent, while the lines of her expressive face were marked with anxious thought. At length she arose, and approaching Grace, threw her arms around her, and pressing her lips to her cheek, said tenderly, "Love me, dear Grace; love me as you did in our own dear home."

This was an exhortation to which the sensitive heart of Grace ever responded, and she replied with a caress, "I do, Bella, I always have—though sometimes I have thought you were cold to me."

"Pardon me, dear Grace, if I have ever seemed so, and believe me I have always loved you dearly. I would have you feel this *now* especially, for I am going to say what love, great love only can excuse. Do not turn away from me, sister, friend, beloved Grace. There, lie there, sweet sister, on my bosom, and I will ask you questions and read their answers in your eyes. You do love Walter Stuart, do you not? Ah! you need not say a word. I have your answer in that quick smile and blush, and the sudden throb of your heart. You would rather never see this Marquis than give him one moment's pain; do not start away from me. I know it, and I am sure that when I tell you I think his present intimacy here would give Walter great pain, you will not permit it to continue."

Grace had already withdrawn herself from Isabel's arms, and she answered coldly, "I really do not see what you would have me do, Isabel; I cannot send away Aunt Elliot's visiters."

"But you can decline seeing them, dear Grace."

"And make myself ridiculous, shutting myself up like a widow, because Walter leaves me. I should think there was little delicacy or propriety in that."

"But must you receive visits which you know would grieve Walter?"

"If Walter were here to be grieved by them, Isabel, I would not receive them; but it is too much to ask that I should consult his fancies, in matters of which he can never know any thing, and when no word of approval from him can reward me for the sacrifice I make."

"But Walter will return, Grace; think of how a look from him will then reward you."

Grace smiled for one moment, the next she said sadly, "Before I see him again, we shall have forgotten the Marquis de Villeneuve, at least so I fear from his last letter. It is about the postman's time now," she added, glancing at the mantel-clock.

He was true to his time, and Grace had scarcely ceased speaking, when a servant entered, bringing her a letter from Walter Stuart. Had Isabel doubted her love for him before, she would have seen it in the joy-lighted face with which Grace recognised the beloved hand.

"Oh, Isabel! how could you ask me if I loved him?" she exclaimed with moist eyes, as she pressed her quivering lips to the writing. Before she had finished reading, that tender moisture fell in large drops of sorrow.

"Oh, Isabel! my fears were prophetic. The gentlemen whom he went to see, have kept him moving after them from place to place, until he has no time to return here. It is very little comfort to me, that he has prevented their fighting, though he seems to feel as if it ought to repay us for every thing."

"Generous Walter!" exclaimed Isabel, sympathizing more with his noble feelings than with the grief of Grace.

"Too generous by half," almost sobbed Grace, as she continued to read, "he has given up applying for an extension of his leave at present, at the request of Colonel

Lee. I think everybody's wishes have more influence with him than mine."

"If it be so, it is because you are as a part of himself, and he has not been accustomed to consult his own wishes; but dry your eyes, dear Grace, and let us go to Mrs. Stuart's, and hear what she will say about him."

They went, and Grace sobbed out her reproaches against her lover on his mother's bosom. "If my whole heart were not filled with admiration of his noble self-denial for duty's sake, Grace, I would try to blame him a little for having made you weep."

"Ah! you do not love him as I do, or you could not be satisfied to have him stay away when he might have been with you."

"I will admit, my dear child, that I do not love him *as* you do exactly; his society is very dear to me, but there is one thing dearer—his honor; and that is in my opinion inseparable from his conscientious discharge of his duty."

To have had Walter Stuart again at her side, Grace would readily have promised never again to see the Marquis de Villeneuve, never to dream of Pauline, but she could not even hope for him, and she soon ceased to resist the influences surrounding her. In vain were Isabel's repeated remonstrances.

"It is of no use talking to me, Isabel," she said in answer to them, "I cannot see any reason why, when Walter prefers Colonel Lee's convenience, or Captain This and Lieutenant That's safety to my happiness, I am to relinquish the little pleasure left me in his absence, because he may not like it. He will not hear any thing of the play or of my part in it, till all feeling on the subject would be folly, unless you take the trouble to tell him of it."

"You know me too well, Grace, to believe that; but

bear with me while I ask one question—have you thought of the misery of having a secret from Walter—something which you dread his hearing?"

"I do not intend to have a secret from him—I shall tell him; I only want to take my own time for it. Everybody is wondering why I hesitate to join in a diversion, in which I cannot deny I should have so great delight. I acknowledge I have not courage to say to them, Because Walter Stuart does not like it."

Isabel was not convinced, but she was silenced, and as Marion had now returned to his duties, and Mrs. Stuart was kept in complete ignorance of the purposed amusement, there was nothing to interpose between Grace and the fate she was daring so boldly. Excepting an occasional letter to Walter and a daily visit to Mrs. Stuart, her whole time was now occupied in preparing for the evening, in the splendor of whose anticipated triumphs all sense of accompanying ill was lost. She who suffers a wish inconsistent with the presence of a beloved object to occupy her imagination or her heart, has become already half a traitress to her love. Grace, who had so lately wept in anguish at her separation from Captain Stuart, would now have found few things so much to be dreaded, as his immediate return. Every letter from him gave her fuller assurance that she need not expect him, yet she never attended a rehearsal, or arrayed herself in either of the dresses in which Pauline was, at different periods of her eventful history, to present herself, without a sudden paleness overspreading her face at the thought, "If he should come now!" But day passed after day, week after week, and he came not; he *threatened* not to come.

At length the week, the day, the hour, the very minute is here,—and Grace, arrayed in the gay dress in which the young Pauline is first to appear, her cheeks glowing, her

eyes sparkling with excitement, enters Isabel's room, holding up a splendid bouquet, and exclaiming, "See what the Marquis has sent me!"

Isabel took the flowers in her hand, and read on a slip of paper appended to them, "To Pauline, from her humble and hopeless adorer, Claude Melnotte." She returned them to Grace without a word.

"But why are you not dressed, Isabel?"

"I am dressed as much as I intend to be, Grace."

"There will be quite a large company, Isabel."

"They will be too much occupied with Pauline to observe me."

"I believe in my heart, Isabel, you think your perfectly plain dress becoming to what Inman calls your Juno-like style."

"I certainly would not wish to wear any thing unbecoming."

"No, you have too much taste to do that; but, pray now, let Martel, when he has finished dressing Aunt Elliot's hair, just fasten some ornament, if only a flower, in yours. That simple braid of glossy jet is very classical, I allow, and not unbecoming, but it looks so determinately plain."

"I do not wish to look *determinately* any thing; so, without calling in Martel's aid, I will add the ornament you desire." Isabel placed a pearl comb in her hair, and asked, "Does that please you better?"

"Yes; a great deal better. Not that I really think you handsomer for it, but it does not look so much as if you thought I was acting very naughtily, and were resolved that you at least would not show any pleasure in it."

"You were very much mistaken, dear Grace, if you supposed that I wished to express any such sentiment.

What I thought, I have told you frankly; and you know I would not go this evening, if you had not entreated it so earnestly; but having consented, and knowing that I can make no change in your designs, do not believe for a moment that I would throw a shadow over the enjoyment for which you incur such a penalty."

"Penalty!"

"Is not the confession which you will have to make to Walter a penalty? I should think it one of no light character."

"It will not cost me so much to come to the confessional as it would you; I am not so proud, I will ask pardon so humbly, that Walter will love me better than if I had never offended; but I must not think of Walter now, but of Claude Melnotte, 'who sends me these beautiful flowers.'"

For once, reality surpassed the dream of fancy. Grace had imagined nothing so beautiful in its completeness as the little dressing-room with its exquisite toilette arrangements, the small, but well-proportioned and well-lighted stage, now a mimic drawing-room, and the elegance of the apartment beyond, in which was the audience lounging upon such luxurious couches as never theatre before furnished. To her compliments on his taste and liberality, the Marquis replied, "It was you who inspired me." He really seemed inspired, remembering his part wonderfully for an amateur performer, and showing considerable readiness in supplying what was forgotten. But Grace was the presiding genius of the scene. The very difficulties over which she had triumphed, or rather the effort which that triumph had demanded, seemed now to lend a new impulse to her talent. She looked, she spoke, she acted her part to perfection, and more than once the plaudits which etiquette had proscribed, burst from the enthusiasm of the spectators. When the last words had been spoken, and

Pauline had shed her last tears on the bosom of her lover-husband, Grace resumed the splendid dress which had been Pauline's wedding garb, and assisted at a supper prepared and served in the most *recherché* style. This was a new and more intoxicating triumph, for here the most distinguished guests lavished on her alone the eulogies in which others might previously, at least, have seemed to share; and the entertainer, no longer as the humble Claude Melnotte, but as the most noble the Marquis de Villeneuve, devoted himself to her with the most undisguised admiration. Mrs. Elliot was all smiles, all gayety; her warmest desires, her brightest anticipations for Grace seemed near their accomplishment, and more than once the thought passed across her mind, "If Walter will but stay away long enough, all will be well."

Far differently did Isabel view the scene. She strove in vain to banish a thousand painful thoughts—were they presentiments? Pauline and Grace Elliot were strangely mingled in her mind. Could the passionate lover of Claude Melnotte be indeed the affianced wife of Walter Stuart? The despairing sorrow—was it all an illusion; had it passed with the hour, and would it throw no shadow on the stream of her cousin's life? Above all, her delicate and lofty nature questioned, could that familiar touch, that passionate embrace ever be forgotten? Such thoughts gave a sadness to her countenance, a gravity to her manner, which more than one little mind attributed to jealousy of her cousin's superior attractions.

The last act in the drama of the evening was at length completed, the last plaudits were given and received.

"May I call on you to-morrow morning?" asked the Marquis, as, having wrapped Grace carefully in her cloak, he drew her hand through his arm to lead her to her carriage.

"This morning you mean," said Grace, with a silvery laugh, as the clocks from the City-Hall and St. Paul's tolled one. "You must not come very early, if you expect to see me."

Exhausted by her efforts, Grace rode home in almost unbroken silence, which her companions felt little desire to interrupt. They were admitted without ringing, by the footman, who carried a night-key for that purpose. They found the hall lighted as they had left it, and through the half-opened door of the front parlor perceived that there was a bright light burning there also.

"Can your uncle be sitting up for us?" exclaimed Mrs. Elliot, throwing the door widely open. Isabel and Grace advanced within it, and both turned pale with dismay; for before them, with his tall form elevated to its utmost height, his arms folded across his bosom, his face ghastly pale, and an indescribable mingling of pride and sorrow expressed in his contracted brow and stern eye, stood Walter Stuart. Grace was checked only for a moment. With that almost superhuman energy that comes to the feeblest who believes that life's weal or wo hang suspended on the events of the passing hour, she roused herself and advanced towards her lover, with her hands extended and a smile upon her lips, though her face reflected still the paleness of his. Instead of taking the hands she proffered, he folded his own arms more tightly around him, and bent his eyes with a still sterner glance upon her.

"Will you not speak to me, Walter?" she cried in a tone of agony. "Tell me at least what I have done, how I have offended you."

He pointed silently to a book that lay open before him, she glanced at it, and saw at the head of the page "The Lady of Lyons." For a moment she was silenced, but as she saw him move, she sprang forward to arrest his steps,

exclaiming, "You cannot leave me so, Walter; it would be too cruel."

He shrank from her, saying as he did so, "Touch me not with hands yet warm from the clasp of another."

She recoiled from his path, wringing the hands she had hitherto extended to him. Thus she stood till she saw him about to pass Isabel; then, turning to her her pallid face, and speaking in tones which only a breaking heart supplies, she exclaimed, "Oh! plead for me, Isabel."

"Walter, you will not leave her thus; look at her."

He faltered for a moment, and turned towards Grace. Her cloak had fallen off, and her gay dress recalled to him not his Grace, but Pauline.

"She is an accomplished actress, Isabel," he said, and would again have passed on, but Isabel threw herself before him, "Walter, you cannot be so merciless. Remember how young she is."

"Young indeed, Isabel, and yet so skilled in artifice."

"Think how she loves you, Walter."

"All seeming, Isabel, all seeming; had she loved me, she would have respected my honor in her own; I saw her, Isabel, saw her this night in the arms of another. Let him take what he has touched,—I will have none of her."

He strode on. He was beyond the door, when a faint, imploring cry from Grace reached his ear; he could not resist it, he turned again, she was falling to the floor, though half supported by Isabel's arm. It was the very attitude of the fainting Pauline. "It is but acting," he repeated to himself, and steeled by the thought, rushed from the house.

Alas! it was no acting. It was long ere Mrs. Elliot and Isabel could arouse the wretched girl to consciousness. When they did, the first effort of her feeble voice was to ask in broken tones, "Is Walter here?"

"We will send for him, dear Grace," said Isabel soothingly. She raised herself from the pillows of the couch on which she had been laid, glanced wildly around her, and sank back in another and more deadly swoon. A physician was now summoned to her, and it was long after daylight when he left her, charging Mrs. Elliot and Isabel on no account to awake her from the deep, heavy slumber into which she had been at last thrown by an overpowering anodyne. Ere that slumber had passed away, Walter Stuart was far distant from New York on his return to Virginia, leaving for his mother a letter written between the time of his going from Mr. Elliot's house and the departure of the first steamboat for Philadelphia. To Mrs. Stuart, who had not seen him at all, the intelligence of this hurried and, for Grace, most ill-timed visit, was like a wild dream. She afterwards learned that Colonel Lee, grateful to Captain Stuart for his ready sacrifice of his own wishes for a prolonged leave of absence to his convenience, and having learned from Marion Elliot the extent of that sacrifice, had offered him a commission to New York on regimental business, which, requiring only a few hours for its execution, would yet furnish an excuse for a visit there of several days, or a week. "I will give you a fortnight's leave, Stuart; it will take you a week to come and go, and I will not demand a very strict account of the remainder of the time. Only one thing let me advise, my dear fellow, attend to the business on which you go, first. That is due to the service."

Walter Stuart gladly accepted this offer. He had no time to write, and pleased himself, as many have done before him, with the thought of the pleasant surprise he was about to give. He arrived about midday in New York, and, with his usual rigid observance of duty, gave his first hours to the business on which he had been sent. It took

him to Governor's Island, and detained him there till seven o'clock in the evening. Hurrying then to Mr. Elliot's house, he found that gentleman alone, and to his impatient inquiries for Grace, received the reply that she had gone to some sort of entertainment given by the Marquis de Villeneuve. The disappointment, the more than disappointment, expressed in Walter's face induced Mr. Elliot to add, "He sent me a card, it was a mere compliment, for he knew I should not go, but it may serve you if I can find it; for as it only says 'Admit the bearer,' it will suit Captain Stuart as well as Mr. Elliot."

After a little search the card was found. "But you will make your toilet first, must you go back to your mother's for that."

"No, I came so unexpectedly that I would not send my baggage to my mother's till I had seen her; it is at the City Hotel."

"That is fortunate, for this entertainment—some sort of fancy ball, I think, from the way in which Grace was dressed—is there too."

A half hour sufficed for Captain Stuart's hasty toilet, and having presented his card to the doorkeeper of the little theatre, he was admitted without a question. He entered as quietly as possible, and taking a seat in a distant corner of the room, with a heart burning with wounded pride and jealous love, saw all—all—.

When the play was ended, he withdrew as quietly as he had entered, resolved,—yes, resolved—not to sleep till he had given back to Grace Elliot her freedom from all bonds to him. His heart might break, but it should be by sudden wrench, not by the slow process of marriage with one in whose truth he could not confide. He was not one "to doat, yet doubt—suspect, yet strongly love." And yet it was not jealousy, not the influence of another over her,

not the mimic yet life-like tenderness which he had seen her exhibit towards that other, from which his resolution sprang, but the studied concealment, the carefully contrived deception that marked a soul untrue. From the play he returned to Mr. Elliot's, and sat for more than an hour feeding his soul's bitterness with every tender passage spoken by Pauline, before the arrival of Grace produced the explosion we have recorded. With every vein and artery swollen, and throbbing with bitter, burning passion, he rushed into the air and trod for hours the almost deserted streets,—hither,—thither,—he knew not, cared not where. Night and silence were around him, but he felt not their solemn influence. A deep sense of wrong endured—an undying tenderness—terrible was the conflict between these principles, and his heart was their torn and trampled battle-ground. At four o'clock he made his way to the City Hotel, where his baggage had been left. He was outwardly calm, not with the peace of heaven which elevates us above earth and its sorrows, but with the stillness of despair. He had ceased to struggle, because he had ceased to hope. His decision was made, his plans arranged, and he hastened to execute them. Unlocking a small desk which formed a part of his baggage, he took from it a package of letters, which, having carefully put up and sealed, he directed to "Miss Elliot"—then drawing the desk to him, he commenced writing rapidly, but ere he had proceeded far, tore what he had written, and cast it on the floor with an impatient movement. A second and a third attempt were equally unsuccessful, and starting from his chair he seemed ready to relinquish the task as beyond his powers; but after several turns across his room he again drew near the table, and with a slower and more subdued manner commenced and completed the following letter:

CITY HOTEL, ½ past 4, A. M.

Mother—I must leave you to learn from others the cause of my hurried visit. I cannot even give you any connected account of the circumstances which will ever render that visit a terrible epoch in my life. There is but one thought in my heart, and of that only can I write.

Mother—Grace Elliot and I are parted forever. Do not suppose that my words are the dictate of jealous passion, raised in a moment and in a moment soothed. No—the wild tempest of feeling had subsided; passion was silenced before my heart issued her decree, and now it is in the deep stillness of the soul's utter desolation, I pronounce the sentence, *we are parted forever*. God knows how gladly I would escape from the doom. Already my heart would find excuses for her, already I long to fold her in my arms, to lay her head upon my bosom and whisper words of tenderness in her ear, but an influence higher and holier than even my love for her forbids me. Were only my happiness involved, I would leave to her the decision of our destiny; but there is more, far more than happiness at hazard. I know my weakness and her power, and with my confidence in her principles, her *truth*, destroyed, I dare not perpetuate that power. Call me not severe, mother—fancy not that I have withdrawn my confidence upon light grounds. Under the thin mask of a fictitious character I have seen her bestow on another looks, words, nay, even caresses, for which I would have given my life; yet even this I might have forgiven. Time would perchance have swept from my brain the scorching impress of my affianced wife weeping in speechless tenderness on another's bosom; but who, what shall restore my trust in the truth of her who for weeks has plotted to deceive me? who,

writing many letters, has been so skilled in artifice as never once to have been betrayed into truth. To *seem* what I wished has been her effort, and how shall I know that her whole life is not seeming? Should I make her my wife without confidence in her principles I should become a suspicious tyrant, soured in temper, chilled in heart, narrowed in mind; I dare not incur such a risk, I dare not court such a wreck of my moral being, and therefore again I say, we are parted forever.

I have striven in vain to tell her this, as it should be told—calmly, yet decidedly—without weak relentings on the one side, or bitter reproaches on the other. To you, my first and best friend, I must commit the task. Her letters, a few hours since my most valued treasures, are already enveloped and addressed to her. I shall leave them myself at your door,—for I am unwilling to intrust them to another hand; yet though at your door, I dare not see you. The interview would unman me wholly. I shall set out immediately for Philadelphia, on my return to my post.

And now, my mother, one last, earnest prayer, and I have done. Do not write me yourself—suffer no one else to write me on this subject. My decision is irreversible; appeals may harrow my heart, but they can never shake my convictions nor restore my lost faith.

Dear mother! pray for your son,

W. Stuart.

Mrs. Stuart had not yet risen when this letter was handed to her, and she had not recovered from the bewildering surprise excited by its contents, when Isabel Douglass was announced. She received her in her own apartment. Isabel was remarkable for composure of manner, but now her step was hurried, her air disturbed, and as soon as she

had entered, she exclaimed in quick, agitated tones, "Oh, Mrs. Stuart! where is Walter?"

"On his way to Philadelphia, as I learn from this letter, which I hope you can explain to me."

She handed the letter to Isabel, who glanced rapidly over it, and looking up as she concluded it, with a flushed cheek and a kindling eye, exclaimed, "Surely he will not persist in such cruelty!"

"Is it cruelty, Isabel?"

"Come with me and look at my poor Grace, and I am convinced you will call it so."

"Poor Grace! I feel for her from my soul; for, however she may have deserved this, I know it will cause her deep suffering."

"Deserved it! How has she deserved it? Is a girlish love of amusement to be so severely visited?"

"No, Isabel; and if this be all of which Grace can truly he accused, my mother's heart shall not shield Walter from my severest blame. But what was the amusement?"

"The performance of a play. I know you will disapprove of it; so do I: but we cannot deny that there are delicate-minded and pure-hearted women who differ from us; and Captain Stuart, with all his fastidiousness, cannot even in his thought throw a shadow over the delicacy and the purity of Grace Elliot."

"I am certain he will not; but, if I remember his letter aright, you have not touched the point which influenced him." She opened the letter, and glancing over it, continued, "He says that it is because his confidence in her principles, her truth, was destroyed; that he dares not perpetuate her power. He expressly declares that he could have forgiven her all, except her plotting to deceive him; her skill in artifice."

"It is her first offence against him," said Isabel, in a lower tone, and with a more subdued manner.

"Were it only against him, though it were her hundred and first, Walter loved her too well not to have forgiven it. But, Isabel, this offence was against a Higher than he. It was a triumph of vanity, the desire for man's applause, over that regard for the true and the right, which lies at the foundation of earthly as well as heavenly hope, without which there is no sanctity in marriage; no holiness, and therefore no happiness, in home. No, Isabel, I love Grace, I pity her, I weep for her,"—tears were streaming down her cheeks,—"but I cannot desire that she should be Walter's wife."

Isabel was silent. The flush had vanished from her cheek, the fire from her eye. In her sympathy for Grace's suffering, she had for a time forgotten her sin; but now she felt that if she had fallen into a pit, it was into that which her own hands had digged. At length she rose, with a dejected air, to bid Mrs. Stuart good morning; but placing her arm tenderly around her, and drawing her to her side, that lady said, "My dear child, you must learn to look upward, for Grace as well as for yourself. For her, too, trials spring not from the earth, but are the wise discipline of love—our Father's love. Think you I need no such comfort for Walter?"

"Ah! Walter will soon need no comfort. Earth has a thousand Lethean streams for man, in her honors, her wealth, her daily-recurring demands; but woman—her life is in her love, and what shall take its place in her heart?"

"Heaven!" answered Mrs. Stuart solemnly; "and we will not complain, dear Isabel, that earth does not speak to us with so many voices as it does to man, if thereby we may hear more clearly the still, small voice of God. Man;

drinks of these Lethean streams, and grows cold in forgetfulness, or hard in contempt; we will not mourn that woman is shut out from them, if thereby she is driven heavenward, and becomes spiritualized and elevated."

"*If*—ah! *if*—" ejaculated Isabel, feeling doubtful, perhaps, whether Grace were one on whom sorrow would be likely to produce such influences; "but," she added after a moment's pause, "you will be very tender to her; you will not let this blow fall too suddenly?"

"I will do all that tenderness can do to spare her."

Had Mrs. Stuart made no such resolution, she must equally have acted in its spirit, when she stood beside Grace, and saw the change which sorrow had wrought on her in a few short hours.

It was impossible to have stood, even for a few weeks, in such close relation to Walter Stuart as Grace had done, without being impressed by the iron resolution which formed the basis of his character. His moral features were chiselled in marble, not moulded in wax. Grace felt that if once his reason decided against her, his heart, suffer as it might, would not resist the decision. Could she have seen him again, there might indeed have been hope, but the intelligence that he had left New York, sounded as the death-knell of her happiness; and though her heart still throbbed at the postman's ring, and her pale cheek flushed at a sudden step, the feeble hope lived but a moment, and each disappointment tightened the grasp of despair. Mrs. Stuart evaded any explanation with her, till her health had recovered from the first stunning blow,—then she handed her the package containing her own letters, with the single remark: "These were placed in my hands for you, with a letter addressed to me."

The package lay untouched upon the lap of Grace, where Mrs. Stuart had placed it; she closed her eyes as

if to shut it from her sight, while her face became deadly pale. Fearing that she would faint, Mrs. Stuart offered her a glass of water, but she put it hastily aside, and rousing herself, asked, "May I see that letter?"

"You may, if you desire it, Grace, but—"

"I do desire it," interrupted Grace; "I would know all at once, and then be at rest forever. Oh God! that I could rest in the grave!" and she dropped her head into her hands and sobbed convulsively.

"God can give you a better rest, dear child," whispered Mrs. Stuart, and laying the letter on her lap, quietly withdrew from the room, and closed the door after her.

CHAPTER XII.

"Yea! even the name I have worshipp'd in vain,
Shall awake not the sigh of remembrance again;
To bear is to conquer our fate."

Campbell.

NEARLY four years have passed away since Isabel and Grace took leave of the South. Let us see what traces these years have left upon their early home and its inhabitants. We saw that home last when Spring was just ripening into Summer, and we return to it in December, yet the scenery seems little changed. The river flows on unobstructed by ice, its waves dancing and sparkling as joyously as of old; and roses, rose *trees* we may well them, are blooming freshly in the open air. Yet s change, on nearer examination, does appear. The g which was so green, and smooth, and soft, is now br

and crisped, and though the oaks, and cedars, and pines have not lost a leaf of their darkly verdant foliage, the pride of India no longer shows its clusters of delicate lilach flowers, or its beautifully serrated leaves; only its once glistening berries, now withered and darkened, hang on its bare branches, food for the robins, driven by winter from colder climates, whose cheerful notes seem to thank Him who has spread this feast for them in their new home. But let us go within the house. Here too all remains the same. The despotic sway of fashion, it may easily be seen, extends not here; for the furniture, good and even handsome as it is, would long ago have been discarded from the house of even a third-rate fashionable in New York, or Philadelphia, or Boston. The door of a parlor stands invitingly open, and we will enter there. It is a cheerful room, for through the uncurtained windows the sun beams from the south, and tempts one to look abroad, while the blazing, crackling logs, the bright andirons across which they lie, and the cleanly swept hearth, tell a tale of comfort and hospitality, and make that first impression, whose importance all acknowledge, a very agreeable impression. Three persons are in this room. One is our old acquaintance, Aunt Nancy, who still appears in the same costume in which we saw her last—a black bombasine dress, and a white muslin handkerchief folded plainly across the bosom. On her gentle and kindly face time has touched lightly, and if he have added whiteness to her already gray hair, her simple mob cap, with its close border of lace, conceals it. She sits in a large rocking-chair, and near her on two small benches are seated two young black girls, probably about twelve years old, sewing. Their round plump forms, and their good-humored faces, show that life has not gone hardly with them.

Aunt Nancy sits so that she can look out upon the river,

for she has sent a man to the nearest post-office, which is five miles distant by water. After many a fruitless glance, she sees or fancies a dark speck upon the sparkling waters, and Rose and Flora are called to the windows, that she may have the evidence of younger and better eyes on the subject. They profess at first to be doubtful, indeed Rose cannot see the speck at all; but at length it becomes visible even to her; it grows larger, the sun flashes on the broad paddle as it plays rapidly now on this side and now on that, and before many minutes have passed, the small, light canoe with its single jetty guide, may be distinctly seen. Very soon it is at the wharf, and scarcely waiting to fasten it there, the boatman hastens towards the house, putting on as he goes the jacket, which he had found too warm while he paddled.

"Well, Harry! have you brought any letters?" asks Aunt Nancy as he enters the parlor hat in hand.

"Yes, ma'am! I bring two, and I tink one is from young missis, else Miss Isabel, ent it, Miss Nancy?" and Harry hands the letters, showing the one whose postmark had become so familiar to him, that, without reading a letter, he recognises it everywhere. The letter was from Isabel, and when assured of this, he waited quietly for the intelligence it might convey. It proved to be intelligence worth waiting for; Grace was coming to spend the remainder of the winter at home.

"Dat's de best letter I bring you yet, Miss Nancy," exclaimed Harry, with a face literally shining with pleasure. "Young missis a coming home; dat's good news for true, —and Miss Isabel too, ma'am, ent it?"

"No, Harry! Miss Grace is coming by the advice of the doctor, because she has been sick, and her aunt Elliot is kindly coming with her, to take care of her, and Miss Isabel must stay to keep house for her uncle, while Mrs.

Elliot is away. Now, Miss Grace is only coming on a visit, but the next winter, I hope, Miss Isabel and she will both come home to live."

"I 'sure, ma'am, we'll all be glad when dat day come," and with this assurance Harry retired.

Aunt Nancy turned to her letter again, but before she began its reperusal, she looked up to say to Rose and Flora that they might put up their sewing, and carry the news of Miss Grace's visit to their grandmother. This grandmother was the blind old Hagar—for these girls were cousins—and soon they might have been seen running, jumping, dancing on the way to her house, shouting to all whom they saw that Miss Grace was coming.

To Aunt Nancy, the pleasure of that letter was not all unmixed. It would be joy indeed,—inexpressible joy,—to fold one of her nurslings to her heart, in this the home of their childhood, but why were they not both coming? The reason that was given seemed to her scarcely sufficient. The letter communicated too the rupture of Grace's engagement with Captain Stuart, without assigning any reason for it. Isabel wrote with evident reluctance on the subject, with which, she said, Grace had desired that her aunt should be acquainted before they met, as she wished never again to refer to it. This was not very satisfactory intelligence of Grace, and of herself Isabel was even less communicative; though here, too, there was something in her tone which indicated to one whose perceptions were quickened by her affections, that the unreflecting joyousness of the child had passed away from her, and that if happiness still remained, it was the graver, more thoughtful happiness of the woman. One sentence in the letter gave Aunt Nancy deep joy; it was this: "I think, dear Aunt Nancy, that I can leave every thing respecting myself to God, not only with a submissive, but with a re-

joicing spirit. I have no desire to take myself out of His hands. I find such blessedness in resting quietly, gently in His arms; but it is harder to trust thus for those we love."

There were others besides Aunt Nancy, who thought that Mrs. Elliot's leaving Isabel with Mr. Elliot during her absence, showed a very unusual and even unnecessary degree of care for his domestic comfort. Could they have known how absorbing her desire for the marriage of Grace with the Marquis de Villeneuve had become, and how Isabel's presence interfered with the accomplishment of that desire, they could better have appreciated her motives. For months past Mr. Elliot had pressed upon his wife the necessity of retrenchment in their mode of living, acknowledging to her losses and embarrassments in business, which had greatly diminished his income. To his representations on this subject, she had replied at first with vague promises of compliance at a future time; not doubting, that before that time arrived, some lucky turn of affairs would render it no longer necessary;—but he had of late become so urgent, that she had actually appointed a period at which she would consent to give up her carriage and horses, dismiss some of her servants, and even retire into the country, if he wished it. This period was the coming spring. "Let me give the girls the benefit of this winter in society," she said to her husband; to herself she added, "If properly influenced, Grace can hardly fail to marry the Marquis de Villeneuve, now that Walter has deserted her; and if she do, I will go abroad with her and avoid all these mortifying changes. They will seem perfectly right, and matters of course, when Mr. Elliot is left alone; and by the time I return, he may be able again to resume our present style, or, at least, the alteration in our circumstances will have passed out of people's minds."

Here, it will be observed, all rested on Grace being properly influenced, and to this proper influence she soon found that Isabel's presence opposed an almost resistless obstacle. One glance of Isabel's calm, penetrating eye, had more than once disconcerted her in the execution of her best-laid schemes; while, with Grace, her whole power was used to foster feelings and arouse resolutions opposed to those which Mrs. Elliot desired to promote. When Grace, in one of her varying moods, burst into passionate reproaches of Walter Stuart's harshness and cruelty, and Mrs. Elliot would have aggravated her resentment and aroused her pride, in order through that pride to lead her to another, Isabel's voice was uttering the nobler sentiment, "Convict him of injustice, dear Grace, by proving yourself worthy of him;" or, "If he have been unjust to you, Grace, you may feel the fuller assurance that he will return to you. His is too noble a nature to persist in injustice."

The time came when Grace too felt Isabel's presence as a fetter; when, hopeless of retrieving the past and impatient of the present, she would have sought new objects of interest, and might have found a new impulse to life in the gratification of resentment, and consolation in the triumphs of vanity; and from these materials she might have formed for herself a future; but without suspecting the existence of such designs, Isabel rebuked them in the germ. Such low and worldly aims could not live in her presence, or, at least, she seemed so unconscious of their existence, she gave to Grace such deep and earnest sympathy on the supposition of her entertaining feelings so inconsistent with them, that to acknowledge them, or act on them, required a degree of moral courage and self-reliance greater than Grace could command.

Ever drawing her motives from without, acting for and

from others, Grace now found herself controlled by two opposing influences. It was as if two diverse spirits alternately ruled her life. Isabel would have had her look rather at her own faults, than at those of others in the past, and seek strength and peace for the future, not on earth, but in Heaven; in the development of those higher principles of her nature, connecting her with the eternal and the unchanging. Mrs. Elliot, on the contrary, would have strengthened her resentment, as we have already said, that she might use it for the promotion of her own purposes, and, acquainted herself with no other sources of joy than those of earth, she would have had Grace seek in the light bubbles floating on the fountains of pleasure or of vanity, compensation for the cup of happy love which had been dashed from her lips.

Poor Grace! miserable indeed was this portion of her life. Her sweet dream of life broken; the love which had brightened and ennobled her existence changed into its shadow and its bitterest mortification—and changed by her own act—well might she grow pale, and thin, and fretful in spirit, awakening in her friends the deepest anxiety, and at length drawing from Mr. Elliot's family physician the advice that she should spend the winter in a warmer climate. For a week before this advice was given, Grace had not left her room. Twice since her separation from Walter Stuart she had suddenly roused herself to the determination to appear again in society, and play her part there gayly—bravely. This determination had been on both occasions the result of a conversation with her aunt, in which Mrs. Elliot had expressed strongly the grief and humiliation she felt in having others regard her niece, the niece in whose beauty and accomplishments she felt so much pride, as the victim of slighted love.

"Depend upon it, dear Grace, however we may sympa-

thize with such persons in a novel or a play, they only inspire contempt and derision in real life."

To Grace no more efficacious argument could have been addressed, and she accordingly exerted herself, as we have already said; went to a dashing party, danced gayly—more gayly than ever before, though she refused all solicitation to waltz—talked, laughed, sang; who would have believed that fever lent such unwonted brilliancy to her eye and cheek, or that gay words and gayer laugh came from a breaking heart? Each of these efforts had cost her a week of low, nervous fever, during the continuance of which she wept silently and inconsolably, rejected almost all food, and turned impatiently away from every expression of sympathy and kindness. Her spirit was ever crying from its inmost depths to God, "Thou hast taken away my idols, and what have I more!" During all this time, Mrs. Stuart had been refused admittance to her. She had not seen her since the day that she left Walter Stuart's letter in her hand, till the evening of that on which she learned the advice of her physician respecting her removal south, when Grace sent Isabel to her to request that she would visit her. Mrs. Stuart obeyed the summons without delay, and found Grace wrapped in a dressing-gown and seated by the fire, in her chamber alone. It was hard, when looking at those heavy eyes and that pale face, to remember any thing but her sufferings, and as Mrs. Stuart bent over her, and pressed her lips to her forehead, a tear fell upon her cheek.

"You weep for me!" exclaimed Grace, resting her head caressingly on the bosom of her friend, and turning her languid eyes up to hers. "You pity me!"

"Can you doubt, Grace, that I have felt deeply, tenderly, for all your sufferings?"

"Does he feel for them too? Oh! do not turn away

from me without answering. It is the one thing in life I desire to know. I have tried to harden myself against him; I have tried to find support in my pride: but it cannot be, I cannot live without his love. Tell him so; tell him I wait only a word from him, and that word will be life or death."

It was impossible for Mrs. Stuart to resist such pleadings, and she promised to write to her son. The promise left Grace tranquillized, almost happy; and Isabel, when she again entered the room, rejoiced at the gentler expression of her cousin's face.

"Good-night, dear Bella," whispered Grace, as she laid her head upon her pillow; "I can love you to-night, and I can pray, for I hope once more."

Isabel kissed her, but a dread fell on her, that the hope would never be realized, which was thus put in the place of God.

Mrs. Stuart wrote, and Grace counted the days, the hours, till an answer could arrive. None came. Hour crept after hour, day after day, till another week had passed, and during all that time, except when at rare intervals sleep brought to her the blessing of forgetfulness, every passing second fell on the heart of Grace like the drop of water on the rock.

"His heart is of flint; he knows neither love nor pity," she cried in her agony.

"God both loves and pities you, dearest; trust Him, and He will yet bring you joy," whispered the soft voice of Isabel.

"How can He, when He has taken *him* from me?" questioned the impatient heart of Grace.

"Will you not write again?" she asked, pleadingly, of Mrs. Stuart.

"I will, Grace," she replied; and she wrote, but the

tone in which she assented now inspired neither tranquillity nor hope, for Mrs. Stuart herself doubted whether Captain Stuart's silence was not the expression of his inflexible determination. The woman and the mother were at variance in her heart. At one time she regretted not having complied with his urgent entreaty, that no appeal should be made to him on this subject. She felt that his mother should have been the last to harrow his heart, when assured that she could neither shake his convictions, nor restore the confidence necessary to his peace. But the next hour, perhaps the next minute, the broken-spirited Grace would stand before her in all her hopeless desolation, and she would lament the iron nature of man, against which the tender heart of woman so often casts itself, only to be bruised and crushed.

A week after Mrs. Stuart's second letter had been sent, Mrs. Elliot said to Grace, that she had waited in silence the result of these two applications to Captain Stuart, though she had been far from approving them—she had waited in silence, but not in indifference. She hoped, for the honor of woman, that Grace did not intend again to lay herself humbly at the feet of one, who, it was but too evident, contemned her.

"Captain Stuart may have been ill or absent," suggested Isabel. How Grace blessed her for the suggestion! But Mrs. Elliot permitted her not long to retain the ray of comfort it had given.

"Such a possibility had, I acknowledge, presented itself to my mind," she said, "and determined not to judge him hastily, I wrote to Marion, to inquire into the facts; he replied, that Walter had left the fort on a visit to Mr. Falconer, but as this was only a few miles off, his letters were sent to him by a trusty hand as soon as they arrived. Marion adds—" and here Mrs. Elliot took his letter from

her reticule, and read from it, "Walter, I am sure, would have sent for me if he had been ill, yet to render assurance doubly sure on this subject, I would have ridden over to Mr. Falconer's, had I not received your letter just as I was preparing to set out on an excursion to Washington with Miss Duncan and her father. I think, that without taking that trouble, I can give you the key to all that seems enigmatical in this affair. Walter has decided against Grace, and he does not mean to reconsider his decision. I may say with some confidence that this is the case, because when he first returned from New York, with a sterner air than I ever knew him assume before—and Heaven knows my follies have sometimes made him stern enough—he requested me—the request sounded very like a command—never to name Grace to him on any occasion or under any pretext."

A low, gasping sound interrupted Mrs. Elliot's reading. She turned to Grace, from whom it proceeded, and saw such an expression of agony in her face, that, for an instant, her heart smote her.

"Pardon me, dear Grace," she said, with more than her usual tenderness of manner, "I do not willingly give you pain, but I feel that you ought to understand this as well as everybody else does. I suspect there are few of your acquaintances in this city, where birds of the air seem ever ready to publish one's very thoughts, who do not know that you have offended Captain Stuart so deeply, that though you have twice implored his forgiveness, you have implored in vain."

"That cannot be said with truth," interposed Isabel; "and how can any one out of our own little circle know any thing of Captain Stuart's having been written to?"

"I cannot say how they can know, but I am sure they do know, and they who have felt jealous of Grace's suc-

cess, now evidently rejoice in her disgrace. Can you wonder, Grace, that I long to have you appear again, to silence their insolent sneers, and show that you can still triumph over them? Come now, rouse yourself, and promise me that if I bring some of these people here to-morrow evening, you will make your appearance, and show them that you are still their queen." A faint smile rose to the pale lips of Grace, and Mrs. Elliot pressed her point with more courage. "This can offend no one; promise me then, will you?"

"I will try."

"That is enough; if you try, you will succeed."

The company was assembled, and Grace, her heart embittered and her pride inflamed by another day of vain expectation, appeared among them. The Marquis de Villeneuve too was there, and never had his devotion to her been more apparent. Every word, every look from him was sweet incense to her wounded pride, and Grace accepted the incense. Blame her not, ye who have never known what it was to apprehend "the world's dread laugh." Her fears excited by Mrs. Elliot's exaggerating reports, she had entered the room trembling at anticipated mortification, and he had given her triumph; for he was still *the* Marquis, and his smile still conferred distinction. If she walked, his arm supported her; if she sat, he stood beside her, conversing now in a tone of badinage, now with a shade of more earnest feeling. He was amusing her with an account of the gayeties that were promised for the winter, when Mrs. Elliot exclaimed, "Ah, monsieur! that is a feast of Tantalus to Miss Elliot and me. We can enjoy none of those gayeties, for we are condemned to pass the winter in Georgia."

"In Georgia! Ah! what a sad winter we shall have! I can never stand it. I shall go back to France, unless

you will permit me to visit you in Georgia; will you?" he asked of Mrs. Elliot.

"You must ask that of Miss Elliot. She is the lady *Chatelaine;* for we are going to her house."

"Will you permit me to claim your hospitality?" he said, turning to Grace.

She felt that many eyes were upon her, and her cheeks flushed half with timidity, half with triumph over the envy of those who had sneered at her sorrow, as she answered, "My aunt's friends will always be welcome in my home; if we go to Georgia, we shall be happy to see you there."

"I cannot thank you here," he murmured, bending low to her; then rising, said smilingly, "the lady *Chatelaine* speaks already in the queenly style—we—"

One week after this conversation, Mrs. Elliot and Grace set out for Georgia. The season had been unusually mild, the travelling was still good, and they went in their own carriage, attended by the Marquis de Villeneuve in another.

On the evening in which his escort was offered and accepted, Isabel followed Grace to her room, and with a manner full of grave, earnest tenderness, said, "May I say a few words to you to-night, Grace, or—you look weary—would you rather hear me to-morrow?"

"Oh! pray, Isabel, say to-night all you have to say. I can stand any thing better than a disagreeable anticipation."

"Why should you apprehend any thing disagreeable from me, dear Grace?"

"And why not from you as well as from others? All grow cold to me, why should not you?"

"Because our early home, with its tender memories, has woven a bond not easily broken."

"Then it is not for *me* you care?"

"Do not let sorrow make you captious, Grace; whatever be the foundation of my tenderness, be assured, I love you dearly, and I come to pray you for that love's sake, not to let pique lead you into doing what you will, I fear, have reason to repent."

"Speak out, Isabel, and say at once in what you think me wrong."

"I will, Grace; it will be painful to me to offend or grieve you, but I must not think of that when the peace of your life is at stake. I fear the encouragement you are giving to the Marquis de Villeneuve will put the seal to your unhappiness. There are men, perhaps, whom the appearance of a rival would recall, but Walter is not—"

"Isabel! How can you be so cruel as to name him? Ah! if you had known what it is to love, to give up your whole being to another,—to think, to feel, to speak, to act only as he would have you,—and then, to find yourself cast off as a worthless thing,—made the world's mock.—Oh, Isabel! how could you remind me of that which it must be the effort of my life to forget, and to make others forget?"

"Grace, forgive me," said Isabel, throwing her arms around her cousin; "I knew that I must give you pain, but it is only as a step to comfort. Do not despair, dearest; have confidence still in Walter." Grace made a gesture of impatience, and endeavored to release herself from Isabel's embrace. "Then, Grace, if that be impossible, have confidence in yourself—at least, have confidence in God. Believe me, there is in Him comfort even for this sorrow, only live for the truth and give up all this false show, this terrible struggle to *seem* happy with a breaking heart."

"Isabel, I pray you, leave me in peace. Peace—" she repeated with a bitter smile; "leave me to such peace as I can find; we are so different that we cannot judge of

happiness for each other. I cannot live and know myself the object of ridicule and contempt. I think," she added in a colder tone, "that no one can blame me for endeavoring to make the most of the future, instead of repining for the past; nor should I think you could regard it as very extraordinary that I find some balm for my wounded pride in those attentions of the Marquis de Villeneuve, which must show to all, that, however I may be contemned by another—" here the lip of Grace quivered with ill-suppressed emotion,—"he waits but a look from me to offer me the brilliant position it is in his power to bestow."

"Ah, Grace! but think how valueless this position would—"

"If you think it so, Isabel, pray keep the opinion to yourself. I know no good that can result from making me undervalue the fragments of enjoyment that are left to me. I must bid you good-night, now, for I am very weary, and I must rise early to-morrow, as I have promised to go with Aunt Elliot and the Marquis to Inman's at ten o'clock. He says that if I can give him two or three sittings before I go away, he will finish my portrait before I return."

And thus did Grace put away from her the true heart which would still have strengthened her in the right. Isabel saw her depart from New York with many a sad foreboding, and she was rejoiced when the evening of that day of departure came, to receive a visit from Mrs. Stuart, who likewise found it easier to endure her anxieties for Walter and her sorrow for Grace in a friend's company, than alone. Each exerting herself for the other's sake, they gave such a cheerful aspect to the room in which they sat, that they wiled Mr. Elliot from the calculation of that day's enterprise in stocks and its effect on the business of to-morrow, to spend another, and yet another hour in chat with them. About eight o'clock the sudden drawing up of

a carriage at their door, caused as sudden a pause in their conversation. It would scarcely have been noticed at another time; but now, two of the party at least, were in that excited state in which every thing unexpected alarms. The door-bell rang, and Mrs. Stuart and Isabel listened with the most intense anxiety for the next sound. Heavy steps approached the parlor in which they sat, the door was flung open, and Mrs. Stuart started forward to greet Walter, while Isabel, mute and still with overpowering emotion, could only see his supporter, Mr. Falconer. Mr. Elliot hastened to offer to Mr. Falconer the greetings which only he was composed enough to give, while Walter Stuart, pale and feeble, almost tottered to his mother's arms, exclaiming as he reached them, "Mother, you see the reason I have not answered your letters, I have been too ill even to read them till four days ago; I have travelled night and day—but tell me of Grace. How is she, mother?"

"Miss Elliot is better, my son."

"God be thanked for that! I scarcely deserved such mercy, who had been so unmerciful in my judgment of her; but now let me see her, mother—does she still keep her room?"

"You are too feeble and too much fatigued to-night, Walter, to endure any agitation, wait till you have had one night of quiet rest."

"I can have no quiet rest till I have seen her, mother. Think what I have made her suffer."

Mrs. Stuart felt that the truth must be told, yet, as she pressed Walter's fevered hand and looked into his pallid face, she dreaded to reveal it. He read her embarrassment in her face, and exclaimed, "Mother, you are concealing something from me;" then turning to Isabel, he asked with startling abruptness, "Isabel, is Grace dead?"

Mr. Elliot, engaged with Mr. Falconer, had heard little of what passed between Captain Stuart and his mother, but that thrilling question aroused his attention. He knew nothing of the necessity of caution in his communications; for, though aware of some coolness having existed between Walter and Grace, he had supposed it only the result of a lover's quarrel, proceeding, as Mrs. Elliot had told him, from some jealous freak in Walter, and when Grace again appeared in society and resumed her usual habits, he concluded that the affair had ended as such affairs generally do, in reconciliation.

"Grace dead!" he exclaimed. "What could make you fancy any thing so terrible, Walter? I do not think her life has ever been in danger, and when she left us this morning, she looked almost as well as ever."

"Left—this morning—where has she gone then?"

"Did you not know the physicians had advised her spending this winter in Georgia? I really think myself it was very unnecessary, but I never oppose physicians; so, she and her aunt set out this morning."

"Set out—how?"

"By land; they went in their own carriage. The roads are said to be in very good condition for the season; still, I should hardly have consented to their going in this way, if the Marquis de Villeneuve had not kindly offered to accompany them. He is an idle man, you know, and can go where he will."

Had Mrs. Stuart even desired to interrupt this conversation, she must have found it difficult to do so from the rapidity with which question and answer had followed each other; but, in truth, she knew not whether most to regret or rejoice that Mr. Elliot was thus communicating to Walter that which must be made known to him, and which she would have experienced such pain in telling. She waited

the result therefore in trembling silence, with eyes in which a mother's anxious heart was mirrored, fastened on the face of her son. At the name of the Marquis de Villeneuve, she saw his brow contract into a frown, and the color mount suddenly into his sallow cheek. The next instant he looked towards her, and her heart throbbed painfully, as, for the first time in his life, she read reproach in his glance. Mr. Falconer saw what was passing in the heart of his friend, and he knew too, better than any one there, how dangerous all excitement was in his present condition.

"Mrs. Stuart," he said, "the carriage in which we came is waiting, and I think the wisest thing Captain Stuart can do is to enter it and return home with you. He needs rest, for we have, as he tells you, travelled night and day."

"You will remain with us, I hope, Mr. Falconer," said Mr. Elliot.

"I thank you, sir, but I have come at present only as my friend's nurse, and if Mrs. Stuart can accommodate me—"

"To say that it will give me great pleasure to do so, is but a cold expression of my feelings," Mrs. Stuart replied, holding out her hand to him in the friendly greeting which in her surprise and excitement she had not before offered.

Captain Stuart yielded without a word to the guidance of his mother and friend, and in a few minutes Isabel and Mr. Elliot were left alone. He would have drawn her into conversation respecting Walter and Grace, whose relations began to appear to him in a somewhat doubtful light, but her answers were so vague and unsatisfactory, that he soon returned to his calculations, and left her free to think—to recall the one thrilling glance in which his

eyes had met hers—the few simple words of greeting which *he* had spoken, and to ask herself again and again that soul-thrilling question, "Does he love me still?"

CHAPTER XIII.

"*She* hath a tear for pity, and a hand
Open as day to melting charity."

King Henry IV

First Angel.—"Let me approach to breathe away
This dust o' the heart with holy air!"
Second Angel.—"Stand off! She sleeps and did not pray."
First Angel.—"Did none pray for her?"

E. B. Barrett.

On arriving at his mother's, Walter Stuart retired immediately to his own apartment, declining any attendance, and though more than once that night Mrs. Stuart crept softly to his door to listen for some sound that might encourage her to enter, none was heard. The next morning he stood, at early dawn, by Mr. Falconer's bedside, to inquire if he were willing to set out that day with him on his return to Virginia. Observing some hesitation in his friend's manner of replying to the question, he said quickly, "If you have any desire to remain longer, now that you are here, Falconer, do not hurry away on my account; I must return to my duties, but I am now quite strong enough to take care of myself."

"No, no, Stuart, I was only surprised by this proposal of sudden departure. I will be ready for you in half an hour."

"We can afford an hour. My mother will give us some breakfast before we set out."

Captain Stuart's manner was perfectly calm, but there was a coldness, a hardness about it, which Mr. Falconer had never seen in it before. The same characteristics were evident to his mother, as he met her tender greeting. She would in former times have remonstrated against his resolution of hurrying away so immediately, but now she not only felt remonstrance to be useless—there was something about him which made her feel it to be impossible. Yet he was not unkind. He inquired for his young brothers, and left for each of them a present in money, but expressed no desire to see them. He asked respecting the completion of some pecuniary arrangements to which he had advised his mother when he last saw her. But in all this there was no softening of the countenance, no beaming of the eye; he looked a statue,—he spoke, he moved an automaton.

"Will you present my respects to Mr. Elliot—and—Miss Douglass, and say to them that I regret not being able to see them again," said Mr. Falconer to Mrs. Stuart at parting. There was a slight delay, a momentary hesitation, as if he would have added something more, but then, turning abruptly away, he walked with a quicker step than usual to the carriage. He had sat with Mrs. Stuart, the previous evening, for some time after Walter had withdrawn to his own room. They had conversed of Grace Elliot, of her early characteristics, and of the unfortunate influence which Mrs. Elliot's worldly and vain nature had exercised over her.

"She seems to have no fixed principle, but the desire to please; she will be through life, probably, just what her companions make her," said Mr. Falconer,—then, after a moment's pause, with an effort which Mrs. Stuart little

suspected, he added, "What different results the same education has produced in the two cousins!"

"Different indeed," said Mrs. Stuart; "but I know not that we can ever speak of two persons as having had the same education. Things alike in themselves will appear so differently to minds occupying different positions, and when did two minds ever occupy precisely the same position? Besides, there are circumstances in the life of each controlled by no human agency, often visible to no human eye, whose effect on character is more deep and enduring than that of all the ostensible means of education."

She paused, and Mr. Falconer did not interrupt the silence. He seemed sunk in revery, from which, after some minutes, he roused himself suddenly to say, "It was in this parlor that I first met Miss Douglass. It seemed to me, in the momentary view I had of her this evening, that she was greatly changed since that time."

"How changed?" asked Mrs. Stuart.

"I have not answered that question satisfactorily to myself. She has become paler and thinner, but the change to which I allude seemed deeper, more important than this."

"You are right; a great change has passed over her. Isabel left me, the last spring, a lovely *child*, I had well-nigh said; for with high principles and a true and lofty faith which she seemed to have imbibed, even in her earliest girlhood, she had a child's joyous, confiding nature; all persons and things were to her just what they professed to be, and all her bright dreams were coming realities. I visited her in the summer—"

"Soon after I left you?" asked Mr. Falconer, who was listening with intensest interest.

"Yes, very soon, and I found her joyless, almost hopeless."

"Did she tell you why?" he inquired, quickly.

"No," answered Mrs. Stuart with a smile, "had there been any confidence on the subject, I should not have felt myself at liberty to speak so freely, but I am only giving you my impressions in exchange for yours."

"And may I ask to what you attributed this condition of mind?"

"If you do, I shall find it difficult to answer. It could have proceeded from no trifling cause, for it has remodelled her whole being; she is a child no more. No longer contented with the surface, she looks into the heart of things. Shows are but shows to her, and dreams but dreams."

"I hope that with her universal trust, she has not lost that loving spirit which seemed to brighten whatever it looked upon, that suffering has not made her less benevolent."

"It has not. Her love is as expansive and even more active now than formerly, but it is of a somewhat different character. She sees apparently less to admire and more to pity in the world, and not only to pity, but to succor. This winter she has spent more of her time and fortune in the service of the poor than in her own pleasures, and that so unostentatiously, that I doubt whether any one but myself has a suspicion of her visits to the hovels and garrets of the suffering poor, or surmises why her dress is less varied and more simple than of old."

"In such interests she has doubtless found consolation?"

"She has found more, she has found a noble serenity. I do not think she has forgotten her cause of sorrow whatever it were. I fear she is not happy, in the usual sense of that word; but she has learned, as Carlyle expresses it, to do without happiness, and instead thereof she has found blessedness."

Mr. Falconer had risen from his seat before Mrs. Stuart

concluded, and was walking to and fro; suddenly he stood still before her and said, "I hope you believe me superior to an impertinent curiosity, and even that you will continue to believe so in spite of the question I am going to ask." He paused, and it was with an embarrassment which he could not conceal that he resumed, "Has it ever occurred to you that Miss Douglass was attached—was particularly interested in your son?"

"In Walter!" exclaimed Mrs. Stuart with surprise, "never, I am assured; she has never regarded him except as a friend."

Mr. Falconer resumed his walk; after two or three turns he drew near her again with a countenance that seemed to prelude another question, but the entrance of one of Mrs. Stuart's younger sons interrupted the conversation, and he had no opportunity of renewing it.

The serenity for which Mrs. Stuart had given Isabel credit was not proof against the disappointment she experienced when informed in the course of the next morning that these guests of a night were already on their way to Virginia. Poor Miss Burns, who lived in a little back attic, and, amidst much physical suffering, contrived to support herself, so far as she was supported, by her needle, received a visit this day which she had not expected, for Isabel had learned the noble alchemy of transmuting her sorrow into blessings to others, and her mercy ever descended again, "dropping like the gentle rain of heaven," upon her own thirsty heart. To draw her still more out of herself, there arose about this time unanticipated claims upon her sympathy within her own home.

Mr. Elliot's financial difficulties had increased till each successive movement which he made in business was but the desperate attempt of the unsuccessful gamester, risking what he can ill afford to lose with the hope of re-

trieving what has been already swept from him. The stock speculations in which he had of late largely engaged were in truth only a legalized system of gambling, subject to all the fluctuations of fortune that make a faro table so exciting, and their influence on his health, temper, and spirits become daily more perceptible.

Isabel had never greatly *honored* her uncle. He lacked that firmness and energy which are essential in securing any high appreciation from a nature like hers. But she *loved* him for his kindly, affectionate heart, for his gentleness of nature, and yet more, for that indefinable something in look and tone which marked his connection with the guardians of her early life, and reminded her ever that he was of one family with her own indistinctly yet tenderly remembered mother.

As Mr. Elliot left his home immediately after breakfast and rarely returned to it before night, Isabel saw little of him, but that little was sufficient to inspire her with an apprehension that some present or some anticipated ill was pressing heavily upon the forces of his life. The evident impatience with which he received any inquiry into his causes of suffering, however guarded and delicate, and the honorable feeling which forbade her to reveal to another that which he would not permit her to express to himself, compelled her to brood over this apprehension in silence, confining it to her own bosom and thus increasing its power. The newspaper was always Mr. Elliot's companion at breakfast, and as he sat one morning with his coffee untasted at his side while he searched its columns with an eager and hurried eye, Isabel was occupied in reading the changes which had lately passed over him, and vainly imagining what could thus in a few short weeks have blanched his hair, sunken his cheeks, and stolen from his form its elastic vigor. Suddenly he looked up, and their eyes met.

The tears that had gathered in hers were not needed to evince the deep pity of her soul—it spoke in her glance. The color flushed to Mr. Elliot's brow, and he turned impatiently away. Isabel's was a courageous soul, and she never proved it more than by pressing into her uncle's confidence at that moment. Laying her hand upon his arm she said gently, "Do not be angry with me, dear uncle, for having seen that you are disturbed, and for wishing to know why it is."

"As to my disturbance, Isabel, it is no more than every man of business feels at times, and it would be useless talking to you of its cause, for a woman can never be made to understand any thing about business."

"Perhaps they would understand more about it, if men would talk more frequently to them of it. Come now, dear uncle, Aunt Elliot invested me with all her privileges; and one of them—the most valued one, I doubt not—is to sooth your sadness, to hear and sympathize with all your cares. She shall not be defrauded of her prerogatives in my person."

"Your aunt Elliot! Do you suppose I should ever speak to her of business?"

"Perhaps she has not a taste for business, but I have decidedly, so I will play Aunt Elliot *with a difference.*"

It was hard to preserve this playful tone, for his brow grew more severe, his tones more impatient every instant, but Isabel smiled on, though her hands grew cold and her heart beat faster with the effort. To her last observation he replied, "You are very persevering, Isabel, but since you have such a taste for business, it is a pity it should not be gratified, by hearing what will soon be known to everybody—that I am a ruined man—*ruined,* mark,—that I have raised money,—all that they are worth, more than they would bring,—on my place in the country, on my house

in town, on my horses and carriage, on my furniture, on the very plate which you were polishing so carefully just now; that this money is all gone, that I and you, and all of us, are living upon the property of my creditors; and, if this is not enough to account for my *disturbance*, you may add to it that I see in that paper," and he struck it passionately on the table, "how I might in a little time recover again all I have lost, and I must let the chance go by for want of the few paltry hundreds which six months ago I would have spent upon a bauble of no more real value than a child's toy. Is that reason enough, think you, for disturbance?"

What a wonderful power of developing all the force that is in a man have such trials! Mr. Elliot had never evinced so much energy in all his life together as he did at that moment. He turned his eyes almost fiercely upon Isabel in his concluding question. She met his glance firmly, yet gently, and replied, "Reason enough at least, dear uncle, why you should reveal your difficulties to a friend, and especially to one who may be able to aid you. Did you not tell me some weeks ago, that you had placed five thousand dollars in bank for me? the money received from the sale of the house in Washington-street, I mean," she added, observing a bewildered expression in Mr. Elliot's eyes.

"Well! what of that?'

"That if that five thousand can win back what you have lost, can give me back my own dear, kind, cheerful uncle again, it will confer more happiness than ever five thousand dollars did in the world before."

Isabel had come quite near her uncle, and was standing with her arm around his neck, and her face turned lovingly up to his. He had anticipated blame and reproach in looks if not in words; he had been hopeless, and here were love

and hope. Isabel felt already repaid for her five thousand dollars, when she caught the flash of joy that irradiated his whole face for an instant. It was but an instant, and drawing her closely to his bosom, he suffered his head to fall on her shoulder, and wept there. But man weeps not long. A moment he gives to this silent expression of feeling, and the rest of the day to action. Happy for him that it is thus!

Mr. Elliot soon raised his head, and kissing Isabel's cheek, said, "You are a good girl, Isabel, a noble girl, and I thank you from my soul, but I do not know about taking your offer. If I should be mistaken in my judgment,—and though that seems to me impossible, I may be,—if I should lose this venture too, I have no means of repaying you."

"Do not speak to me thus, my uncle. Have I not eaten of your bread, and drunk of your cup, and been unto you as a daughter? I have no father if you put me away from your heart and home, and I feel that you do this, when you refuse to exercise a father's right over all that I have. Besides," she added, making an effort to smile again and to speak more lightly, "have not I an interest in preserving the home I love, and the plate I have polished, and if we should fail in our attempt to do so, have we not fifteen thousand dollars left to be happy on in an humbler home? You must not refuse me, my uncle, if you would not have me feel that I am an alien to you, not one of your family."

It is easy to persuade, where we have the heart on our side, and Mr. Elliot appeared that day in Wall-street with a check for five thousand dollars in his pocket, and a lighter heart in his bosom than he had long had.

About this time letters were received from Mrs. Elliot and Grace, which occasioned no little surprise. They were in Washington, and as it was the height of the sea-

son there, they found themselves so well entertained, that they had resolved to remain a fortnight or perhaps three weeks. The fortnight had nearly passed away, when a second letter arrived from Mrs. Elliot, in which she wrote as follows:—

"Grace has entirely recovered her looks, and though her spirits are still somewhat unequal, she is gayer at times than I have ever seen her. She can hardly help being pleased, for wherever she goes admirers throng around her. Our New York members,—I mean those from the city, some of whom I have long known,—have been very polite, but we needed nothing more than our introduction by the Marquis to the French Minister and his lady, to give us the *entrée* to the best society here. Monsieur and Madame Bourdier unite great personal popularity to their commanding position, and whether for De Villeneuve's sake or for our own, they have quite devoted themselves to us. I wish you could have seen Grace the evening of our first introduction to the White House. Her dark maroon-colored velvet dress contrasted splendidly with her fair complexion and pearl ornaments. Monsieur Bourdier handed her in, and I can assure you she created no slight sensation. Even the President's grave face lighted up with an unusual expression of pleasure as he greeted her, and Madame Bourdier whispered to me, 'Ah, madame! if I could only present your charming niece at our court.'

"We shall have some idea this evening of Parisian entertainments, for Madame gives a *fête* which the Marquis says is to be quite *à la Parisienne*. I have the most exquisite lace dress for Grace. It has just occurred to me to keep my letter until to-morrow and give you some description of our evening."

The next morning Mrs. Elliot added the following postscript:—

"It is impossible—with a dull, heavy headache, doubly impossible—to give you any just idea of our entertainment. It transported one back to the times of magic and Haroun Alraschid. Aladdin's lamp seemed a necessary appendage to people who could convert their rooms into orange and myrtle groves, and could entertain their guests with a lottery, in which though there might be more bonbons than bijouterie, there were no absolute blanks. Nothing less than the philosopher's stone could have supplied to all, such prizes as fell to Grace and to me. Mine was a diamond ring, and hers the most beautiful bracelet I ever beheld, formed of exquisite cameos. On examining it, I perceived underneath the clasp a cipher, which I requested Madame Bourdier to explain to me. 'It is the coronet of a Marquise, surmounting the arms of the De Villeneuves,' said she. Grace heard her, and seemed for a moment ready to faint. She had taken the bracelet from me, before Madame Bourdier spoke, and now, in her agitation, it fell—it almost seemed as if *she flung it*—on the floor. The Marquis sprang forward, and picking it up knelt gracefully on one knee, and entreated to be permitted to clasp it on the arm of the fair owner. I believe every one regarded it as a public declaration of his devotion. Grace cast down her eyes with a sort of bashful pride, which was really lovely, and, almost to my surprise, held out her hand to him. She says it was only because she was too much confused to know what she did, but I am sure every one considered it as a very gracious acceptance of his homage. That the Marquis thought it so, none could doubt who saw his proud, happy look. He raised her hand to his lips before relinquishing it. 'Monsieur de Villeneuve,' said Madame Bourdier, 'you bring the gallantries of Paris to America.'

"'Wherever there is beauty and love,' said Monsieur

Bourdier, glancing first at Grace and then at the Marquis, 'there will be gallantry.'"

Isabel read this letter with a trembling heart. It was but too evident that Grace was approaching a terrible precipice, lured thither by the delusive sophistries of others, and blinded to her danger by her love of display, her passionate desire of admiration. To one who knew her yielding, dependent nature, there was little consolation in the conviction that there were moments in which the mists around her were dissipated,—in which she perceived her true position, and started back from it in terror. Such, Isabel did not doubt, was the feeling which had impelled her to fling her bracelet on the floor, upon discovering the cipher engraved on it; yet the next moment the flatteries of the Marquis had soothed her ruffled spirit, and she had stifled the dictates of her heart in obedience to those of her vanity. Already had Isabel attempted to point out to her the very danger which she was now so rapidly nearing, and she had only irritated where she would have saved; yet, in the spirit of him who exclaimed, "Strike, but hear me," she resolved to make another effort to arouse her. She had one advantage now—she would be heard; for the written words could not be silenced. She wrote with the heart; and vivid, yet tender, was the picture she presented. Hers was the cause of truth, and she would use no false glosses in maintaining it. She acknowledged all the brilliancy, all the charm to the senses, of the position in which Grace would be placed by her acceptance of the Marquis de Villeneuve,—an acceptance to which her continued encouragement would almost compel her. But after giving to its attractions their brightest coloring, she asked, "After all, dear Grace, what is there here for the heart,—what to strengthen us in earthly trial—what to elevate our spirits to the Heavenly—what to repay us for a sacrifice, from

the very contemplation of which the sensitive and delicate mind shrinks appalled ?"

As a contrast to this picture she presented another equally free and decisive in its touches. She did not conceal her suspicion that Grace sought in the glare and mad excitement of her present career, a refuge from the desolation of blighted hopes and crushed affections ; she did not deny that should Grace dare to pass from this glare and this excitement, it would be into darkness and a void. " Yet, dear Grace," she added, " sad as this life may seem, would that you could summon courage to meet it ! There is at least no falsehood, no seeming in it ; it is a true life, and at the heart of truth, dearest Grace, ever lies peace. Do not think I speak as one who never suffered. Will it give force to my words if I acknowledge that I have entered that dark and desolate void ? I entered it, dear Grace, not trusting in my own strength, but leaning on the arm of everlasting love, and I have found there a blessed rest. I have not ceased to sorrow, and yet I am at peace,—a peace which I would not exchange for all that my young life knew of brightness."

Grace never replied to this letter ; but a week after it was sent, arrived another gratulatory epistle from Mrs. Elliot, which rendered all reply needless. Grace had accepted the Marquis de Villeneuve, and their engagement had been made known to their mutual friends.

" The Marquis," wrote Mrs. Elliot, " has acted very generously. His presents to Grace are really splendid, and he has already invited me to spend the first year of their wedded life with them in Paris, intimating at the same time the pleasure he should feel in having Miss Douglass do the same."

Aunt Nancy was doomed to experience the disappointment of those hopes which had made glad her lonely home.

Harry was again the bearer of a letter which he was sure was from Miss Grace. The contents of this letter we will place before the reader:

WASHINGTON, Jan. 5th, 182–.

MY DEAR AUNT,

I have been sitting for more than half an hour with my pen and paper before me, wanting courage to say what must at last be said. I know, dear Aunt Nancy, that you love me, and that you have enjoyed the idea of my coming to you for a few weeks; and that makes it so hard now to say that I cannot come,—that I am going far, far away—farther than I have ever been before, without even one farewell look at you and the old house. Oh, Aunt Nancy! I cannot bear it: what shall I find in their finest palaces that I shall care for half so much as for the dead leaves from those old oaks under which I have walked by my own dear father's side? and who will look on me in that far city with half the true love in their eyes that even dear old Maum Hagar has for me? And yet I am going away from you all, and I have little hope, in spite of all the promises of the Marquis, that I ever shall see you again. I am very unhappy, dear Aunt Nancy,—at times very unhappy,—it is so hard to know what is right; people think so differently,—you always knew—I was always happy when I did what you told me; and now, if I could fly away to you, and lay my head on your bosom, and tell you all my troubles, as I used to do, and hear your counsel, I am sure I should be happy again. My tears come so fast that I can hardly see what I write;—I am interrupted, and must conclude my letter at another time.

Jan. 7th.—It is two days, my dear aunt, since I commenced this letter, and it is still unfinished. Were it not that in a letter, as well as in other things, *le premier pas*

always costs most, I would throw aside what I have written, for except my love for you and the dear old place, and my sorrow for leaving you both without another look, there is not a word in it that does not seem very ridiculous to me to-day. Few would think it a great cause of grief to be engaged to a Marquis, and about to take a very high position in one of the most brilliant cities in the world. You will not be surprised at this intelligence, for my last two letters must have prepared you for it. I wish I could have introduced the Marquis to you. He is not, perhaps, all that in my childish dreams a Marquis and a lover appeared, but he is agreeable in his appearance and manners, and what is of more consequence, loves me with all my faults upon my head; a quality, this last, which those learn to value highly, who have found how little love they are likely to meet with in the world. Monsieur Bourdier, the French minister here, says that De Villeneuve is one of the oldest titles in France, and that I shall find myself at once at the very head of French aristocracy. He talks of the Marquis's splendid hotel in Paris, of his grand chateau, and his high connections, until I really feel quite afraid that I shall not know how to play my part with any propriety. Aunt Elliot, however, has promised to go with me, and before she leaves me, I hope to be perfect in my new character. The Marquis intends to invite Isabel too, but I do not think she will accept the invitation. Isabel's taste and mine are so different that we rarely like the same things, and I doubt very much whether the life we are likely to lead in Paris would suit her very well. The Marquis regrets almost as much as I do that we cannot see you before we leave America, but Monsieur Bourdier has spoken so seriously to him of the necessity for his immediate return, that he feels there is no time to be lost in preparing for it; and as it seems that his devotion to me

has kept him already many months longer in this country than he intended to be, I cannot venture to delay him longer. We shall set out to-morrow on our return to New York. As soon as we arrive, Aunt Elliot will commence the preparations for our—oh, Aunt Nancy! I cannot write that word, there is so much in it from which my heart shrinks—but it is enough to tell you that we expect in one month to sail for France. I dare not trust myself again to talk of my feelings in going from you. It would be ungrateful, I feel, to indulge any sad emotion, when so bright a lot awaits me. I will write you when the wedding-day is appointed, and on that day I want you to make a present to every one of the negroes, in my name.

Send me your blessing, dear Aunt Nancy. Whatever I may be to the rest of the world, to you, I know, I will always be Your own dear

GRACE ELLIOT.

It had been very long since Aunt Nancy had met with any thing that so ruffled the tranquillity of her life, as did this letter. This visit had been for weeks the object of such joyous anticipation. She had taken such delight in preparing for it. Every thing within and without the house had been made to assume its brightest aspect, that Grace might again be won to love the home from which absence had doubtless somewhat estranged her. In her own room—the room in which she had slept in her infancy, —this affectionate care was especially visible. Its dimity curtains, and toilette drapery, and coverlet were bleached as white as snow, and its mantelpiece had been adorned for several days past with roses, and jonquils, and hyacinths, plucked each morning while the dews were yet sparkling upon them, and arranged by Aunt Nancy's own hand, with the hope that ere night the eyes of her darling would be

gladdened by their beauty. It was to this room she now went with that sad, sad letter in her hand. She looked around on its simple preparations with a quivering lip, she remembered the splendid hotel, with its brilliant yet dangerous distinctions, for which Grace had exchanged this home of her pure and happy childhood, and while she wept for her own disappointment, kneeling once more beside the bed where she had so often knelt before, she prayed.

We will yet hope for Grace, for prayer so fervent from a spirit so humble and so tender, is ever heard in heaven.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I'm weary of the crowded ball; I'm weary of the mirth,
Which never lifts itself above the grosser things of earth;
I'm weary of the flatterer's tone, its music is no more,
And eye and lip may answer not its meaning as before.
I speak in very bitterness, for I have deeply felt,
The mockery of the hollow shrine, at which my spirit knelt."

Whittier.

New York, bustling, busy New York was more bustling, more busy than ever. The belle of the season was about to be married, and to be married to *the* Marquis; and milliners, mantuamakers, tailors, jewellers, upholsterers, and confectioners were interested in the event. Mrs. Elliot was full of pleasing cares. The preparations for her own wedding had scarcely given her so much enjoyment,—they had certainly cost her far less money. Not that she now expended so much on her dress, but her reception-rooms were to be refurnished, and the bridal apartments of Grace

to be fitted up. Nor was this all. Madame Bourdier had promised to come to them for a week on an occasion of so much interest, and even the Minister had expressed a hope that he would be able to make such arrangements as would permit him at least to be present at the marriage, and apartments must be prepared for them, and all must be done in a style of elegance befitting a Marquis and his friends. There had been something in Mr. Elliot's manner whenever a bill was presented to him of late, that made her think it prudent to say nothing to him of her intentions till they had been accomplished. Accordingly his first intelligence of them was received from the view of the imperial carpets, the girandoles, and chandeliers, the splendid mirrors, the rose-wood tables, couches, divans, and ottomans, which under the direction of Chester, and Phyfe, and Coxe, had in a single day taken the place of more accustomed objects. To this view he had been introduced by Mrs. Elliot with no small degree of that tact on which she prided herself. Watching from a window for his approach in the afternoon, she met him at the hall door, and in a playful, caressing manner, linked her arm in his and said, "I am going to introduce you into enchanted halls, but, before you enter them, you must submit to be blindfolded."

Loosing a scarf from her shoulders, she threw it over his head.

"Nonsense!" ejaculated Mr. Elliot, but his voice was not severe, and he suffered himself to be led forward by her.

They stood within the parlor, and having first closed the door, she removed the scarf, exclaiming, "Look! Is that not enchantment, and am I not a pattern wife to arrange all this without wearying you with endless talk about possibilities and proprieties?"

Whatever misgivings there might be in her heart, she forced herself to speak and to look mirthfully; but there was no mirth in his eye as he turned to her with the question, "And pray, madam, who is to pay for these things?"

"Do not look so dreadfully grave about it, and I will promise to save you that trouble too. You need only hand me your purse or your pocket-book, well-filled, and I will settle the whole affair."

"You will not settle it from my purse or my pocket-book. You have incurred the debt yourself, and now, you must pay it yourself."

"How can you be so unreasonable, William? Do you not see that it would have been impossible to avoid doing what I have done?"

"I see no such thing."

"Then it is because you will not look at the facts. Here are Monsieur and Madame Bourdier,—persons accustomed to the utmost elegance,—coming to De Villeneuve's wedding; would you have had me receive them in a house filled with old, shabby furniture, so *passé* in style, that it would stamp us at once as persons of no fashion."

"There would be less disgrace in that than in having your husband known as a person of no credit, a character which your follies, if unchecked, will soon acquire for him."

If Mrs. Elliot knew little of her husband's business, that little was enough to supply her with a retort to this speech.

"If my *follies* were set against your losses in Wall-street, it might soon be determined, I suspect, to which you are most likely to owe the character."

This speech was not the less irritating because it was unanswerable; and Mr. Elliot rejoined in an accent at

once angry and determined, "There is no use in this wrangling, Matilda, and you know that I do not like it; but my determination is unalterable, and can be made known in very few words. I never will pay a dollar of this money, for the best of all reasons—I cannot. You have your own allowance of a thousand a year—your father took care that my losses should not touch that—and you can pay for them yourself. If you cannot pay the whole in one year, as you have had no losses in Wall-street you can probably get credit for a part of the debt."

"You are very unkind, William," said Mrs. Elliot in a faltering voice, while tears rushed to her eyes, "you know it will be impossible for me to spare any part of that thousand dollars, if I go to Paris."

"Then you must give up Paris, unless you can find some better expedient, for I cannot do impossibilities; I cannot pay for these things, and I will not consent that you shall leave behind you an honest tradesman's bill unpaid."

Mrs. Elliot had no farther opportunity that evening of testing upon her husband her powers of reasoning or of persuasion, for, as he concluded this decisive sentence, he went to his study, turned the key in the lock, and did not make his appearance again, till assured that the presence of others would secure him from any renewal of the subject.

"You must give up Paris;" these were words of dread and dole to Mrs. Elliot. Paris had been the dream of her life; each year the dream had become brighter in contrast with the realities which every season's repetition rendered more tame and insipid. Never had that dream seemed so near its fulfilment as now, and should it be disappointed, what would people say; what would the Marquis think—and Grace? but at thought of her, a beam of hope irradiated the gloom.

The will of Mr. Elliot, the father of Grace, had not left

the sole management of her property to her uncle. Two of his friends in Georgia had been associated with his brother as executors of his will, and to them had been confided the preservation and entire management of her property in that State; but the whole surplus income of that property, instead of being applied to its increase at home, was, by his direction, to be paid over to Mr. Elliot, of New York, to whose sole discretion its appropriation was confided. The average amount of this surplus income had been eight thousand dollars. In its investment Mr. Elliot had evinced more prudence than in those he had made for himself. Twelve thousand dollars of it had been placed out on bond and mortgage. This, since the engagement of Grace with the Marquis, he had recalled and placed in bank to her credit. He informed her of this arrangement in the presence of her aunt, adding, "It is a large sum, Grace, but remember, it is not inexhaustible. I would have you prepare yourself in a liberal and handsome manner for the position you are about to occupy; but you must not forget that it will be several months before you can expect to receive the proceeds of your last year's crop, and that ready money will be very acceptable both to Monsieur de Villeneuve and yourself, on your entrance into life in Paris."

Of all this, Mrs. Elliot only remembered at present, that there were twelve thousand dollars in bank subject wholly to the control of Grace, and that Grace was easily stimulated to a lavish, careless expenditure, which she had been accustomed to dignify with the name of generosity. With an almost assured hope, therefore, she entered the dressing-room of Grace early the next morning, and dismissing the French *femme de chambre*, who was assisting at her toilette, commenced the projected attack upon her purse by lamenting the necessity of their parting with a fervor of emotion

which even the possibility of disappointment rendered by no means insincere.

"But why do you talk of our parting, Aunt Elliot?" questioned Grace, as she received and returned her caresses. "You are going with me, and who knows but that I may come back with you; at least, we will not grieve with a year of pleasure before us."

"But there is no pleasure before me, Grace, for I cannot go with you."

"Cannot go with me!" repeated Grace, in dismay.

"No, Grace, I fear it is impossible."

"And what will De Villeneuve, what will Madame Bourdier, what will everybody think?"

"I have thought of all that, Grace; thought of it through a long, sleepless night;—but what can I do? Your uncle refuses to pay for the furniture I have bought; I am sure you know, Grace, it has been only what was absolutely necessary; I could not have the friends of the Marquis consider his connection with you a *mésalliance*, as they might well have done, if every thing around us had appeared shabby and old-fashioned. It was done for your sake, dear Grace, and that shall comfort me. I will not regret it, let it cost me what it may; no, not even though I must give up my intended visit to you."

"But I do not see why you should give it up."

"Because, as I have said, your uncle will not pay for this furniture; and I must. How I am to pay three thousand dollars—for little as it is, it cost that—out of an allowance of a thousand a year I am sure I do not see,—the people must wait on me; but at any rate, with this debt on my hands, I must not dream of Paris. Ah, Grace! if I had twelve thousand dollars in the bank!"

"And I have twelve thousand dollars in bank, and I can pay for it!" exclaimed Grace.

"Oh, no! that is not to be thought of; you know after a few weeks the furniture will be of no use to you."

"But it was bought for my advantage, and I will pay for it. It was so stupid in me not to remember sooner that I could."

"Dear Grace! How generous you are! But you will never get through the world so; you must learn to be more prudent; more like Isabel."

"Isabel is generous too; you know she has not so much to give away as I," said Grace, with something like a twinge of conscience, as many memories rose up to her of Isabel's sacrifice of her own wishes to her lightest caprice.

"I did not ask her to give me any thing; but, before I would say any thing to you about my difficulties, I did ask her to lend me, on interest, and with good security, part of the five thousand dollars that I knew her uncle had deposited in bank for her. She colored up and really seemed quite angry, and at last told me that she had already disposed of that five thousand dollars. She may have disposed of it in her thoughts, but I am sure her uncle would never give her the control of such a sum of money, without some better reason for it than she has had this winter."

"I think I had better get Uncle Elliot to give me a check at once for all the money I want for my own purchases, as well as for the furniture. How much shall I say?" asked Grace, as she was leaving her room.

"You have decided to let your present camel's hair shawl serve you till you arrive in Paris; have you not?"

"Yes; the Marquis says there is not one we have seen here handsome enough for me."

"Generous De Villeneuve! Ah, Grace! you are a fortunate girl. I think you had better ask your uncle for five thousand dollars. Two thousand will certainly pay for all you will like to purchase in New York."

"Jewels and all?" questioned Grace.

"You will want no jewels. Your pearls are new, and Marquand, you know, says they are the most beautiful that could be procured in London; as for diamonds, we will talk of them to-morrow."

Mrs. Elliot smiled very significantly, and Grace understood that the Marquis de Villeneuve was about to present her with a suit of diamonds. They came during that day, and Grace felt that she could desire nothing more in jewellery. They were so large, so perfect, and set with such taste and elegance, that she was not surprised to learn from her aunt, that the jeweller from whom they were purchased, had requested permission to exhibit them to some of his customers before sending them home. "We understand that the splendid diamonds lately to be seen at the Messrs. Marquand's brilliant establishment, were purchased by a gallant French nobleman, well known in our fashionable circles, for his intended bride, the peerless flower of the South," was an announcement in a morning paper, which Mrs. Elliot did not suffer to escape the eye of Grace, and which caused her a thrill of pleasure almost as great as the possession of the jewels themselves.

All around Grace was smiling and joyous. Admiration beamed on her from every eye; the soothing tones of love were heard in every voice. It seemed as if every cloud were to be driven from her sky, for even Mrs. Stuart's grave looks, which might have cast some shadow on its brightness, she was not doomed to encounter. Mrs. Stuart was absent from the city; she had gone, Grace asked not where or when. To all save Isabel, Grace seemed then the most enviable of beings; she had attained the summit of her wishes, and in the smiling present and the glorious future, all memory of the sombre past faded into indistinctness. But to Isabel's deeper, because more loving percep-

tion, there was a restlessness, a fitful gayety about her which betokened a heart not at peace with itself. She seemed to live more than ever in the outward—hurrying onward in pursuit of some diversion for the passing hour. During the last few months Isabel seemed to have passed beyond the sphere of Mrs. Elliot's control, and that without any effort on her own part. She was now permitted to pursue her own tastes with only an occasional remonstrance. These tastes seldom led her into the assemblies of glittering inanity, so dear to her aunt and cousin; and many an evening as she saw Grace, brilliant in beauty and sparkling with a feverish gayety, depart for the scene of anticipated triumph, she turned to the quiet room in which books, or the cheerful converse of intelligent friends, awaited her, with the deepest pity in her heart, and a prayer upon her lips, that the same Power which had stilled the waves of her own troubled life, would breathe over that of Grace those accents of divine energy—"Peace; be still." Without any expression of these feelings by Isabel, Grace had an almost intuitive consciousness of them, and they excited in her an impatience little short of resentment. That Isabel should acknowledge her good fortune seemed essential to its full enjoyment, and to compel this acknowledgment she was ever eager to exhibit to her every new acquisition. To her the diamonds were of course displayed. Isabel admired their splendor; but to the sensitive ear of Grace there was something wanting in her tone, and she was turning away with a feeling of disappointment and pique, when passing her arm affectionately around her, Isabel exclaimed, "Ah, Grace! if I could but be sure that you were happy!"

Grace withdrew coldly from her embrace, as she replied, "You must think me very unreasonable, Isabel, if you suppose that I am not happy."

She advanced to the door, but before she had reached it, Isabel's arm was again around her, as she urged, "Forgive me, Grace. We are to part so soon; let there be no unkindness between us."

"If there be unkindness between us, Isabel, it is in your trying so constantly to make me dissatisfied with the lot that is before me."

"Not to make you dissatisfied with it, Grace, but to arouse you to a perception of your real feelings, while it is yet possible for you to escape from it. Grace, it is not yet irrevocably cast."

Grace grew deadly pale, and for an instant Isabel feared she would faint, as she gasped out, "Isabel, is any other interested in these hints; do they mean—"

"Nothing, Grace," Isabel hastened to say, "except what I once wrote you, that no position in life is so much to be deprecated as that in which we dare not appear what we are—in which we must be false to ourselves or others:"

Before Isabel had ceased speaking, Grace stood before her, proudly, haughtily erect, with the flush of passion on her cheek, and its sparkle in her eye; its depth, too, was in her tone, as she said, "If you do indeed desire, Isabel, that there should be peace between us, I warn you, that you must never recur to this subject."

"I will obey you, Grace," said Isabel, with gentle gravity.

A week later and Madame Bourdier had arrived, and Marion Elliot. Grace felt that the coil of destiny was tightening around her, and more and more wild grew her efforts to forget what she could not resist. She had never even for an hour deceived herself into the belief that she really loved the Marquis de Villeneuve, and now, she could scarcely subdue the impulse which bade her shrink from him, while she turned with a feeling of inexpressible

dread from every indication of the rapid approach of that day, in which she must solemnly vow to be his—his wholly—his forever. So strong are the instincts with which God has guarded the purity, the sacredness of marriage.

For a week before her marriage the all-powerful "What will they say?" compelled Grace to remain at home, and thus deprived her of the diversion from thoughts that became every hour more intolerable, which she had sought and sometimes found, abroad. The marriage was appointed for Thursday, and on the preceding Sunday—that day so tedious to the triflers of earth, so full of beautiful repose, of calmness and strength for the earnest and heavenly-minded—Marion sat till a late hour of the night in his father's study, writing letters. It was nearly twelve o'clock, and he supposed all the family at rest, when the door opened softly and Grace entered, wrapped in a dressing-gown. Her face was pale from agitation, and as the expression of her countenance seemed to denote, from some painful resolve. Carefully closing the door after her, she advanced to Marion's side, and said almost in a whisper, "Marion—I have a question to ask you."

"Well, *ma cousine, qu'est ce que c'est?*"* he inquired gayly, having amused himself of late in speaking to Grace as if she were a Frenchwoman and could understand no other language.

"Marion," she exclaimed passionately, "do not speak to me in that language; I hate it, I hate every thing connected with it. If it be possible for you to be serious for one moment, tell me, and—oh! Marion tell me truly—does Walter Stuart still love me? I do not ask if he have forgiven me, Marion, but does he love me?"

* My cousin, what is it?

"Grace! in what way can such a question interest you, the bride of another?"

"It is false," she cried, almost fiercely, stamping her little foot upon the floor, "and it is cruel in you, Marion, to call me so; I am not yet that most wretched thing, and I never will be if you can only assure me that I may find in Walter Stuart's affection a shield from the reproaches which my seeming fickleness will incur from others."

Marion looked at her and listened to her with astonishment.

"Grace!" said he, "sit down and calm yourself."

"Marion! you will drive me mad," she exclaimed; "I pray you answer yes or no to the simple question—'does Walter Stuart love me!'—if he do, I know by myself that he will forgive me all the past."

"Grace, I pray you compose yourself." She made a gesture of impatience. "I cannot answer your question, for Walter has used your name to me but once since you parted, and then it was to bid me never again to utter it in his presence." Grace pressed her hand upon her heart. "That was no proof that he did not love you, Grace; Walter's affections are neither given nor withdrawn in a day—but—" he paused with a hesitating manner.

"Tell me all," she gasped.

"I do not believe that he would marry any one, however passionately he might love her, who—who—" Marion paused again.

"Who could engage herself to another, you would say," and the voice of Grace, for the first time since she entered, was unfaltering, though its deep tone sounded like an echo from her very heart. Marion dared not look at her, and could not speak. She remained perfectly still while one might deliberately have counted ten, then she asked in the same tone, "Was that what you meant?"

"Grace, you give me great pain by these questions, what can I say to you?"

"The truth."

"But you ask me of things of which I can know nothing certainly."

"Marion, you either do not or will not understand me; I ask but your opinion whether you *think* that Walter Stuart, should I now withdraw from—from Monsieur de Villeneuve, would receive me as his."

"And should I answer that I believed he would, what then?"

"Then I would pray you, for humanity's sake, to take me hence this very hour, to travel with me night and day till you placed me in his arms. Oh, Marion! the thought of his scorn is eating into my soul. Let him only smile upon me, and I will try to forget what others think."

Again her voice had become soft and broken, her lip quivered, her cheek was flushed, her eyes were full of tears, and her hands clasped in entreaty. Had Walter Stuart seen her, even his stern spirit might have given way, but the feeble can resist for their friends what the strong would find it no easy task to resist for themselves, and Marion answered, "Grace! this is folly, madness. You must forget Walter Stuart, for, I am convinced, it will be the business of his life to forget you, if he have not already done so—but, for heaven's sake, if this Marquis be so indifferent to you, do not marry him."

Grace answered not. She had sunk into a chair and covered her face with her clasped hands. She sat thus for several minutes, and when, rising slowly, she turned towards Marion, he was shocked at the ghastly paleness which had overspread every feature of her face.

"I rely on you, Marion," she said feebly, "never to reveal what I have said to you this evening. Forget it—it is easy for men to forget," she added bitterly.

She advanced towards the door, but Marion placed himself before it, urging, "Let me entreat of you, Grace, do not consummate this marriage with such feelings as you have avowed."

"Would you have me make myself the talk of the whole world without winning back the only love that could give me power to endure it; no, no, say no more of it, but let me pass, Marion, I am weary." He stood aside and she left the room.

It was long ere Marion slept that night, for notwithstanding his light, unsteady temperament, he had great truth of character, and there was something terrible to him in the life of falsehood which Grace had thus revealed. When she met him the next morning, though the color on her cheek might have deepened a shade, her words were gay and her eye bright; and from this time she walked with a seemingly unfaltering step to her doom.

Thursday came. It was the sixth of February, and the day was clear and bright as June, if not so warm. At the request of Grace, Isabel was to be one of her bridemaids, and this morning early Grace entered her room with a case in her hand containing a set of pearls as nearly as possible like her own. Isabel embraced her warmly, and kissed her with the fervently uttered prayer, "God bless you, dear Grace, and make this a happy day to you!"

A slight shudder passed over Grace, but she said nothing; indeed Isabel gave her no time to speak, before lifting the lid of a box near her, she took from it two bracelets woven of hair whose glossy jet bore a great resemblance to her own, and placing their clasps side by side, she said: "There is my wedding present to you, Grace. It is a simple one, but I know you will value it."

"Value it! Oh Isabel!" Grace could say no more,

she was showering kisses and tears upon those precious clasps, the perfect, though small miniature likenesses of her father and Aunt Nancy.

"It is my hair," said Isabel at length, "I hoped you would not be less pleased with them for that."

"Less! Ah, Isabel! but I cannot wonder that you speak thus. You will forgive me, I know," and she laid her tearful face on Isabel's bosom—"you will forgive me for all my caprices. I must not speak now of their cause. But," she added, raising her head and turning to a less painful subject, "how did you get these likenesses? they are so perfect."

"Do you remember a rough, careless sketch made years ago by a visiter, of your father on horseback, which Aunt Nancy preserved because it was so good a likeness? at my request she enclosed it in a letter to me, and Robinson found no difficulty in making the miniature from that. For Aunt Nancy's likeness I had to task my own memory and skill. I succeeded in giving the outlines of her face and something of its expression with a pencil, and by carefully watching the progress of the artist and suggesting alterations and improvements almost daily, his copy grew at last into what I think a very fair representation of her dear kind face."

"It is perfect, and my beloved father's too, and your hair; dear, dear Isabel! I never loved my home and all its inmates so fondly as to-day. Oh! that I were again a happy, innocent child there—that I could change places with the meanest slave privileged to live there—that I could wake from this dreadful dream. Oh, Isabel! it is fearful—fearful!"

The poor girl shuddered and wept convulsively: Isabel wept with her and kissed her, and called her by every endearing name. She longed to do more, to say, "Free

yourself even now," but there was a rap on her door, and Mrs. Elliot's voice was heard inquiring, "Is Grace here?"

"Tell her I am in my room," cried Grace, as she darted through the door of the closet that separated her room from Isabel's.

Mrs. Elliot came to bring to Grace the costly bouquets, arranged with exquisite taste, which the Marquis had sent to her and to each of her four bridemaids. They were accompanied by a note, full of that graceful, airy tenderness which a Frenchmam seems peculiarly gifted to express. It was then eleven o'clock, and as one had been the hour appointed for the ceremony, Grace had little time left for thought. Those two hours were occupied by the friseur and the attendants on her toilette. Their labors were at length completed, and she stood among her youthful bridemaids the acknowledged Queen of Beauty—lovely as the loveliest dream that ever visited the rapt hour of poet or of painter. The exquisite delicacy of the lace which floated around her, the soft, rich folds of the glossy satin,—few thought of these. It was the shower of golden ringlets shining through that light veil, the brow fair as the pearls wreathed among those ringlets, the cheeks to which the flush of excitement had lent a richer beauty, the thousand nameless graces, "that softly lightened o'er her face," or gave more winning attraction to her form and movements, which drew the gazer's eye and remained long impressed upon his memory. If any except Isabel noticed the sadness that lay in her eyes' shadowy depths—it seemed but to give to her loveliness a more spiritual and tender character.

Two questions had greatly disturbed Mrs. Elliot's mind in her preparations for this important event. The first was, should Grace be married by a Romish priest in com-

pliment to the Marquis de Villeneuve's religious creed, or by the Episcopal Bishop in compliment to her own prejudices, which represented Romanism as the faith, in America, of the lower classes, among which only she had known it. This question, the Marquis himself had decided for her, by assuring her that he preferred the bishop, with whom he had some acquaintance, and that he should consider the marriage just as valid, if performed by a civil magistrate as by any clergyman at all. The second question was, should the ceremony be performed at home or at church? There were advantages attached to each place which must be relinquished in the other; but, after mature deliberation, home was preferred in consideration of the difficulty of preserving one's dress in perfect order under the wrappings necessary in a carriage.

At a quarter to one o'clock the elegant phaeton of the Marquis de Villeneuve, drawn by four splendid white horses, with its attendant coachman and footman in new and handsome liveries, stood at Mr. Elliot's door. The Marquis was accompanied by Monsieur Bourdier, who had arrived late in the previous night, and preferred going to a hotel to disturbing Mr. Elliot's family. As soon as they had alighted, the carriage was sent for the bishop, and before he arrived, the favored guests invited to witness the ceremony had assembled. These were "only a few very particular friends," Mrs. Elliot said, yet they amounted to about a hundred persons.

Monsieur Bourdier had requested permission to give away the bride, and we doubt whether even the exquisite loveliness of Grace attracted more attention than his jewelled collar and glittering orders. The Marquis, too, wore the insignia of the order of St. Louis. On the whole it was a gay and imposing, rather than a solemn scene. There were but two deeply serious faces among the spec-

tators, that of the Right Reverend Bishop H——t, whose earnest and commanding eyes awed the lightest into decorum, and that of Isabel, who, as she touched the ice-cold hand of Grace and looked upon her fevered cheek and glittering eyes, as she marked her irrepressible shrinking from the Marquis de Villeneuve at his first approach, and her one wild glance and half step towards her uncle, as if about to claim his sympathy and protection, read the terror of her soul at the linking of those bonds which she herself had forged.

But why need we linger on the sad, yet brilliant scene. Grace had laid herself upon the altar of vanity, and no good angel stepped in to ward off the impending blow. The words were uttered which pronounced her a wife, and she rose from her knees, the admired, the envied, and the miserable Marquise de Villeneuve. We cannot dwell on the details of the day, of the dinner, of the evening reception. Suffice it, they were all that Mrs. Elliot could desire, who laid her head upon her late-sought pillow that night with the pleasant reflection that she had done her duty by Grace at least, if Isabel had by her impracticability marred all her designs for her; for one, at least, of her husband's orphan nieces she had secured a brilliant destiny.

Grace was now impatient to leave America. Still untaught that not in the outward lay her peace, she hoped to find it in new scenes; and it was with a feeling more akin to joy than any that had visited her for long months, that she stood, a fortnight later, on the deck of the noble packet in which she had embarked for Havre, in company with the Marquis de Villeneuve and her aunt, and saw the last faint line that marked the American coast fade into indistinctness. The rush of waters that sounded on her ear was associated with no record of past love and sorrow;

the salt spray which the wind dashed into her face seemed a baptism into a new life, the spirit of youth and hope revived within her, and she sang in low, yet not sad tones,

"With thee, my bark, I'll swiftly go
Athwart the foaming brine,
Nor care what land thou bear'st me to,
So not again to mine."

CHAPTER XV.

"A perfect woman, nobly plann'd,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a spirit still and bright,
With something of an angel light."

Wordsworth.

"The mind is its own place."

Milton.

In little more than three weeks after the departure of Mrs. Elliot, a crowd again thronged the rooms in whose adornment she had spent so much, but a crowd of very different character from that which had lately filled them. It was no longer her "dear five hundred friends" only. All who had curiosity to see, or money to buy, might enter there; for the red flag of the auctioneer waved over the door,—and carpets and tables, girandoles and chandeliers, couches, divans, and ottomans, splendid curtains, French china, and glittering plate, were at the service of the highest bidder. And where were Isabel and Mr. Elliot, while strangers' feet were thus tramping through their home, and strangers'

voices echoing from its walls? They were occupying rooms in a small house in a street far removed from fashionable life. Their landlady, a childless widow, who had been accustomed to eke out a slender income by a few boarders, was a tenant of one of Mr. Elliot's old friends, who was now also his principal creditor. This gentleman had evinced a deep interest in the gentle and generous girl, to whom Mr. Elliot, in a moment of irrepressible feeling, had acknowledged to him that he was indebted for almost all her little fortune, and who yet clung to him in his ruin, soothing him by her affection, and striving to shed the light of her own clear, bright spirit upon his darkened life. This interest even more, perhaps, than his old friendship, had induced him to inquire into their plans, and aid them in their execution by giving them intelligence of the lodgings which they had taken.

Isabel had scarcely bidden adieu to the companion of her childhood, when her thoughts were forcibly drawn from her by her uncle's increased gloom, and, at times, alarming agitation of manner. She regretted now that she had not confided to Marion her late discovery of his father's sources of anxiety, but Marion was gone, and on such a subject she did not dare to write, while so much was still but conjecture. There was so much of wildness often in Mr. Elliot's words and looks, that her terror might have given her boldness to seek Mrs. Stuart's advice, but Mrs. Stuart was still absent from the city, whence she had gone from a generous desire to avoid a meeting, which she believed would be even more painful to Grace than to herself. She went to visit a friend in Connecticut, intending to return as soon as Grace had sailed, but the letter from Isabel which gave her this intelligence, found her nursing the three youngest children of her friend through an attack of measles; and when they recovered, she was still farther

detained, first by her own severe indisposition, and then by a week of unusually inclement weather, during which the navigation of Long Island Sound was considered very unsafe.

Thus deprived of counsel and thrown upon her own discretion, Isabel sought by the same gentle, playful means which had formerly prevailed with her uncle, again to win his confidence, but in vain. Instead of the petulance which she then encountered, all her efforts were met by a deep, dark, sullen gloom. One evening, at tea-time, instead of sending a servant to summon Mr. Elliot, Isabel went herself to his study and entered without knocking. He was seated at a table on which his elbows rested, and his forehead was bowed within his clasped hands. Isabel stepped softly to his side—her hand was upraised, but before she had touched him, he murmured, "If I had only been contented to ruin myself—but fool!—fool!" He paused, and Isabel remained still, not from curiosity, but from awe of the deep emotion which his tones expressed. As she recollected herself, she determined to leave him as silently as she had approached, but before she had taken the first cautious step, another murmur reached her ear: "My poor Isabel! you who always loved me so; I could have borne it better had it been any other than your orphan child."

In an instant, by an irresistible impulse, Isabel's arms were around his neck and her head bent upon his as she said, "Your sister Isabel has sent her orphan child to comfort you. Do not reject her, my uncle; your love, your confidence are more to her than wealth."

Her tears fell upon his cheek and he was melted. He threw his arms around her and pressed her to his bosom, but the next minute he put her from him, and speaking wildly and rapidly, said, "Ah, Isabel! you are kind now,

but what will you say, when I tell you that I have lost your five thousand dollars too?"

She smiled brightly through her tears and answered quickly, "What will I say? Why, that we are very fortunate people in having fifteen thousand left to live upon."

"But you have not fifteen thousand left to live upon. I have withdrawn the ten thousand dollars which I had placed out for you on bond and mortgage; and—and—say half of that has gone in the same way."

"Then we must be contented to live within ten thousand, for I will not permit any extravagance," and she kissed him with a playful tenderness which she rarely exhibited.

Her kindness seemed only to render him more wretched. He threw himself again into his chair and covered his face with his hands. She attempted to draw them away, and he exclaimed, "Isabel, in mercy, leave me! Your kindness only makes me more miserable; but hear all, and then you will be kind no more. Thousand after thousand of your money have I thrown away, even as I did my own, upon the last miserable hope of the gamester, to win back what I had lost. You have not ten thousand dollars, you have nothing but the house I purchased for you the last year; your whole income is about three hundred and fifty dollars. Now you know all the wrong I have done you—go."

While he was speaking, Isabel had tried to sooth him by caresses, but when at the last word he flung her off and drew his hands from her clasp, she rose up proudly erect, and answered in a firm voice, "No, Uncle Elliot, that is not all the wrong you have done; there is a greater wrong than any you have named—the wrong of believing that I value those paltry thousands beyond your love; with such an opinion of me, I wonder not that you throw me from your arms and bid me leave you."

This appearance of wounded feeling accomplished what her tenderness had failed to win. Mr. Elliot folded her to his bosom and called her his child, his noble Isabel, but immediately after he exclaimed, "How shall I endure the thought that I have injured you?"

"We will learn to endure all painful things cheerfully for each other's sake, dear uncle. Every smile I win from you will be worth more than a thousand dollars to me, and so you may soon bring me largely in your debt. But now the first thing you shall do for me is to come and take your tea." He would have declined, but she said in sorrowful tones, "You will do nothing for me, I see;" and he consented.

Before they retired for the night, Isabel ventured to entreat her uncle that he would no longer wear out his energies in the worse than fruitless effort to support false appearances. "Neither you nor I, dear uncle, care for large rooms or fine furniture," she said.

"God knows where we shall find a shelter when we give up this," ejaculated Mr. Elliot, starting from his chair and pacing the room with rapid steps. Isabel rose and joined him, passing her hand affectionately through his arm. After walking two or three times across the room in silence, she said gently, even timidly, "I wish I could speak all my feelings to you, Uncle Elliot, with an assurance that I should neither wound nor offend you."

"Speak, speak, my child; you have a right to be listened to."

"Yes, the right of affection, there never can be any other question of right between us; but since you permit me, I will speak. It seems to me that the most important thing for us—the only important thing, is to ascertain what is right, and then, by doing it, to place ourselves, as it were, under God's protection. This is His world, dear uncle, and

He will give us food and shelter in it, if we obey and trust in Him. Is it not so?"

"Certainly, my child."

"Then, dear uncle, had we not better give up at once this great house and these superfluities which you say no longer belong to us, and let us take our three hundred and fifty dollars—"

"*Yours*, Isabel."

"*Ours*, dear uncle, and go where we can live on it. Marion, I dare say—"

"Ah, my poor Marion! he must suffer too."

"Suffer! with a lieutenant's pay."

"He may suffer more painfully than in his purse."

"Do you mean that his engagement with Miss Duncan may be interrupted?"

"Yes."

"Never! she will love him the better for his sorrows."

"But her father—"

"Is a true Virginian, Marion says, generous and honorable. He will not make his daughter unhappy or withdraw his own favor for the sake of fortune. Marion will do very well, and I doubt not will be rich enough to help on our housekeeping with a ten dollar bill occasionally, if, with my economy, we should ever need it. Oh, dear uncle! we want nothing but trusting hearts to be quite happy."

Mr. Elliot sighed with the reflection, that there was more than this needed for the happiness of one who was conscious of having committed a deep wrong to another; for, though the last desperate ventures made with Isabel's property had been truly made for her sake, and to redeem what he had imprudently accepted from her and lost, he felt, now that he had awoke from his dream, how worse than weak he had been. So much of his property was

mortgaged, to the full amount of what he supposed it would bring, that his hope of saving any thing from the wreck for her was slight indeed, so slight that he did not even deem it worth naming to her. Sad as these thoughts made him, it was impossible to steel his heart against so affectionate a comforter, or his reason against so modest a counsellor, and he promised that he would the next day take the first steps towards paying every man his own.

When they met at breakfast the next morning, Mr. Elliot looked into Isabel's eyes, as if he feared to read sadness there, but she smiled upon him, and he kissed her with a feeling of gratitude as well as tenderness. To her question of "How he had slept?" he replied, "Better than for many nights, my child." So much peace does even a good resolution bring! Upon that resolution Mr. Elliot began immediately to act, and as his losses would soon become generally known, Isabel, with his consent, wrote to Marion. A reply was quickly received from him realizing her happy predictions. He lamented that he had been such an extravagant dog—to use his own expression—or he might have had hundreds laid by, with which to aid his father; but now that he knew his necessities, he assured him he would religiously devote a portion of his pay to him every month. He regretted that his mother had been permitted to go abroad in ignorance of the truth, but added that she would doubtless return as soon as she heard it, and on her jointure, and what he could very well spare from his pay, his father and herself might still live in comfort and not without elegance.

"Cheer up, dear father," he continued, "I shall be a colonel, perhaps a general some day, and be assured my good fortune shall ever be yours and Isabel's—dear Isabel! she belongs to us henceforth, father, does she not? For me, I am so full of joy, that I should be too happy, had I

no sorrow of yours for which to grieve. I have just returned from a visit to my beloved Mary. I gave her Isabel's letter to read, and told her that I had now nothing of this world's wealth, but my commission to offer her. I cannot tell you all she said; it is enough that we are more closely united than ever, she has even consented at last to appoint the day for our marriage, which will be in six weeks from next Wednesday. Both Mr. Duncan and Mary earnestly desire to see you and Isabel, at that time; and for me, I am not sure that I shall not forbid the bans myself, if you do not come. But even this all-important subject must not drive out of my head Mr. Duncan's kindness. When I mentioned to him the change in our circumstances, he said that for your sake he regretted it, but for me, if it induced habits of system and economy, which he hoped my desire to aid my father would stimulate me to acquire, he thought it would be a decided advantage to me. It could, of course, make no change in my relations with his family, and he wished I would say to my father, that if his difficulties arose from any temporary cause, and the loan of a few thousands would help him through them, they were heartily at his service."

Though those dear to him thus united to smooth his descending path, and though his creditors were unanimous in expressing their entire confidence in his upright intentions, and their readiness to concur in any arrangement which should promise to guard at once his interests and their own, there were many things necessarily encountered by Mr. Elliot of a very painful character. The very pity which he saw in the looks of many, was a shock to the feelings of one reared in an elevated position, and accustomed to all the reverence which even in our republican land waits on him who unites to wealth the birth and breeding of a gentleman. Isabel suffered, too, and

not only through her sympathy with her uncle. She had to relinquish many an accustomed gratification; to part with many objects dear to her taste, or to her feelings; to exchange large and lofty apartments, furnished with every convenience and elegance, for confined rooms and scanty furniture; and for many days she found herself very awkward in the performance of many services, which she had been accustomed to receive from others from her earliest childhood. And she had been subjected to one trial greater than all these united.

The fault of Isabel's nature was a reserve that bordered upon pride. Her deepest emotions rarely found expression in speech, even to her dearest friends, and the sympathy which Grace craved from all, was to her a sacred offering, which could be accepted only when tendered by affection. To such a nature, it will readily be seen that any disclosure of her private history, her misfortunes or her necessities to the indifferent, the stranger, or the mere acquaintance, must have been galling indeed. Still more so perhaps would be that subjection of any portion of her time to their control, which must be the result of her assuming towards them the relation of one who for stipulated services should receive a stipulated payment. Yet it required little thought to convince her that three hundred and fifty dollars a year would scarcely furnish to two persons the merest necessaries of life. Something must be done to procure for herself some profitable employment, and it must be done so secretly that her uncle would not suspect it, and so quickly that he could not oppose it. After a rapid review of her various accomplishments, she concluded that music would prove the most profitable. Having first obtained from a celebrated pianist, her former teacher, permission to refer all who wished any attestation of her abilities to him, she next applied to Mr. Foster, the merchant who had already

evinced such interest in her, to procure some pupils for her. This, as she left the terms wholly to his discretion, was soon done, and before Mr. Elliot had any imagination of her designs, she was giving lessons to six little girls, at twenty dollars a quarter. To add to the difficulty with which she commenced these labors, she was obliged to attend her pupils at their own houses, as she was in so remote a quarter of the city that they could not be sent to her.

He who having made the heart,

> "Knows each chord, its various tone,
> Each spring, its various bias,"

can alone tell with what dread that first round of visits was anticipated,—with what a painful, sickening effort they were made. But they *were* made; and as she had ever found it, in obedience to her convictions, she regained her serenity, nor could any of these trials, nor all of them united, cast more than a passing shadow over the sunshine of her soul.

And now, will we be forgiven if we pause for a moment to ask the young heart just standing upon the threshold of life—its object of pursuit, its path of progress, yet unchosen—to look steadily on that picture and on this; on the brilliant, the wealthy, the courted Marquise de Villeneuve, all the energies of her nature wasted on trifles, from which the highest boon she hopes to win is forgetfulness; and on Isabel Douglass, disappointed in her heart's deepest and strongest affection, through the selfish caprice of another; her life of luxurious ease, and elegance, and freedom, exchanged for the petty cares, the self-denial, and the subjection of some part of each day to the control of others, which poverty entails; yet with a high and pure faith in her heart, recognising the hand of Divine Love in

each event of her life. See Grace in one of the most splendid hotels in Paris, where every sense is ministered to—where art is hourly tasked to furnish new pleasures to the capricious fancy—mark her, flitting from one scene of reckless gayety to another, seeking everywhere for something to satisfy the craving void in her heart—and seeking in vain. At the very hour at which she is setting out for some glittering assemblage, let us turn back to the humble lodging of Isabel, and by the dim lamp that burns in her lowly chamber, see her kneeling beside her bed; mark the elevation expressed in her uplifted face; hearken to her prayer, that God would graciously grant to her tenderly-remembered cousin the peace which He has shed into her own heart—and choose your goal and guide. If your choice be the dazzling distinctions, the glittering wealth, the sparkling pleasures of earth, then let your guide be the spirit of earth—the spirit which looks not beyond the narrow circle of self, which sees in love only the gratification of its own desires; in its fellows only the ministers to its pleasures or its pride, which sets the present above the future, and the praise of man above that inward satisfaction, which is the seal of God's approval. But if your choice be the peace of Heaven, then let the spirit of Heaven be your guide; yield yourself to its holy monitions; be careful rather of what you are than of what you seem; be jealous of any spot or blemish on your soul's beauty; let your love be but an intense sympathy with a noble nature; view your fellow-beings as objects for the exercise of your kindly and generous affections; and thus make all things tend to advance you to the fulfilment of your high aspirations—your aspirations after the Holy—the only aspiration in which the human soul can be assured that it will never meet with disappointment.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Grow in the world's approving eyes,
In friendship's smile and home's caress,
Collecting all the heart's sweet ties
Into one knot of happiness."

Moore.

HUBERT FALCONER was not one who could turn with a thankless heart from the thousand blessings in his path, because he had seen one dearer than all, and failed to win it. There was a holy meaning to him in that word "life." It had sacred purposes—purposes deeper, higher, broader than earth. Should its pleasures all be taken away, its duties would still remain, and well he knew that they enclosed a blessedness beyond all price. When therefore he parted from Isabel, and returned to Virginia after her rejection of his suit, he sat not down in gloom and despondence. He entered, on the contrary, with more vigor than ever into his labors of love for the cause of humanity. He exerted himself unceasingly for the elevation of those who had been consigned especially to his care by the Providence of God. Since he had entered the ministry he had received more than one call from wealthy churches in neighboring cities; but their acceptance would, in his opinion, have interfered with the performance of his duties as a son, a master, and a neighbor, and he preferred to preach without salary in the little country church within a few miles of his home, whose pulpit had till then been filled only by an occasional itinerant. Here his congregation consisted of a very few persons of the highest intellectual

culture and social position, and of hundreds of unlettered slaves. His commanding intellect, his refined taste, his unbending rectitude of life, gave him power over the first; but his pitying, self-denying love acquired over the last an almost boundless influence: and the feeling which brought bright smiles, or, not unfrequently, tears of more deep delight to their faces at sight of him, was to his heart a dearer homage than the praise of princes could have bestowed.

It was in their log-cabins, or in familiar converse with them by the wayside, that he received his most cheering impulses, and drank his deepest draughts of strength and peace—proving that it is indeed "more blessed to give than to receive."

Yet there were times when to a mother's sharpened vision there seemed a dimness in his eye, a sorrow in his heart. His hopes were bright, but they looked beyond the grave. He no longer planned for this life or anticipated future years, with the buoyant, all-expecting spirit of his youth. Sometimes, as he walked at the still evening hour under the old oaks and elms that threw their shadow for many a rood around his home, she saw that there was sadness in his air; at other times she caught the sigh with which he laid aside the favorite volume that now lacked the power to chain his thoughts down to the present scene.

"He needs a companion for his heart and mind, one whose youthful feelings may sympathize with his ardent and hopeful nature more fully than I can do," said Mrs. Falconer to herself, and on this hint she spake; but her recommendations of marriage in general, and her eulogies of certain young ladies in particular, were received with equal coldness, and when she urged the subject, he replied by a frank history of his short but eventful acquaintance with Isabel.

With many lovely and noble qualities combined in such proportions as to constitute a character of no common excellence, Mrs. Falconer was said generally to be a little proud. There was in her manner a certain stateliness which afforded some ground for the charge; yet we believe that she was too true a Christian willingly to entertain such a feeling for herself, but for her son how could she be otherwise than proud,—how could she endure for him the indignity of a rejection? Her cheeks colored, and a ray of their old fire shot from her eyes, as she listened to his relation; and when he had concluded, laying her hand upon his, she exclaimed, "Forget her, my son, she is not worthy of you, or she could not have failed to love you."

"That is a mother's thought," he replied with a smile, as he kissed her crimsoned cheek: "she is worthy of the noblest—if a pure and tender heart, and a mind clear and vigorous and full of beauty, enshrined in one of the loveliest forms on which my eyes ever rested, can make her so."

"Is it possible you can love her still?"

"What attribute capable of inspiring love has she lost? I have no hope of winning her, and I would therefore gladly abstract from my love all desire of appropriation; but that is only the baser part of love—the selfish principle in it,—and its higher properties, admiration, and sympathy, and deep interest in her welfare, I would wish to retain always."

No allusion was again made to this subject by Mrs. Falconer until after her son's return from his hurried visit to New York with Walter Stuart. She had regretted the necessity of this visit, and her anxious eye soon detected traces of the influence she dreaded.

"You saw Miss Douglass in New York, Hubert," she said one evening, when he sat near her with a book in his hand, on which it had been evident to her for many minutes that neither his eyes nor his thoughts were fixed.

Mr. Falconer started and colored at the unexpected observation, but recovering himself, answered, "Yes, I saw her, but only for a few minutes."

"Her power must be great indeed, when she is able to exert such an influence over you in a few minutes."

"Influence over me! I am not sure that I heard her speak."

"Indeed! and yet I am sure that you have thought more constantly of her since your return. I hope she has not the power attributed to less young and pleasing witches in olden time of infecting you through her eyes."

Mr. Falconer answered, with a slight laugh, "I will not assert that she has not. But, at present, her influence has been obtained through another. I had a conversation with Mrs. Stuart, which, while it confirmed my impressions of the loveliness of her character, gave me some reason,—or rather, with or without reason, has awakened some doubt in my mind of the truth of my conclusions respecting her feelings toward me."

"How can there be any doubt? Did she not refuse you?"

"Sorrowful truth!" ejaculated Mr. Falconer, with a half smile at her warmth. "She did; and there is really nothing in Mrs. Stuart's communication, when I analyze it critically, which I can set against that fact; yet there was enough to make me perturbed and restless, vacillating between hope and doubt. One moment I am ready to set out for New York immediately and submit my hope to her decision, and the next I accuse myself of coxcombry for daring to hope at all."

"Without accusing you of coxcombry, I may say I should be grieved to have you act on such insufficient grounds, and thus probably afford an ungenerous triumph to a coquette."

"Oh, mother! mother! How little you can conceive

of Isabel Douglass when you apply such a term to her. Could you only see her, the simple dignity of her manners would make you feel its injustice even before you learned any thing of her true and upright mind. I do not hesitate in my decision from any fear of affording her a triumph, but because I shrink from the possibility of inflicting pain on her through her generous sympathy."

"Both the triumph and the pain might be avoided by applying to a discreet friend who understood her feelings."

"I do not think Miss Douglass likely to express her feelings on such a subject to a third person."

"And yet a judicious friend might, with the exercise of a little tact, *discover* something of them—Mrs. Stuart, for instance."

Mr. Falconer rose and paced the room long in silence, then seating himself, said, "Your suggestion is a tempting one, but I fear that your affection for me makes you overlook the objections to it; is it delicate towards Miss Douglass?"

"I do not see how it could be regarded as otherwise by the most fastidious, if you present your affection for her as the reason of the inquiry."

"Could I spend some weeks in New York I would rather trust to my own observation than to any report; but my poor people—there is so much sickness among them just now, that I fear I ought not to leave them for so long a time—I must think of it."

The result of Mr. Falconer's thoughts was the following letter to Mrs. Stuart, dispatched the day after this conversation:

BELLEVUE, —— Co., VA., Jan. 7th, 182–.

DEAR MADAM,

To apologize for the liberty I am about to take, in claiming your sympathy and your services, would be to do in-

justice to my perfect confidence in your friendly regard. I feel convinced that I shall please you as well as myself better by acknowledging, without any ceremonious glosses, that I need the aid of a judicious friend in a matter of the deepest interest to me, and of such delicacy that, except my own mother, who is, for many reasons, out of the question, I know no one but Mrs. Stuart to whom I would be willing to confide its conduct.

If you recall to your mind our conversation respecting Miss Douglass on the evening I lately spent with you, it will furnish you with a key to my present communication, and perhaps the interest which I then evinced in her, may have prepared you for the confession that she is and has long been very dear to me. This confession was made to her before we parted in the last summer. That we did part shows that it was not favorably received; and yet there was a depth of sorrow in her rejection, which seemed to me even then not quite compatible with the indifference that should have prompted it; and you assure me that since that period a change has passed over her life indicative of some experience of deep and agitating emotion. Shall I appear presumptuous to you in acknowledging that these circumstances have awakened a hope too dear to be suffered to die unheard, a hope that some obstacle, now perhaps removed, some misapprehension since corrected, may have separated us?

You will not, I am sure, suspect me of the littleness of endeavoring to avoid by this application to you what some might esteem the disgrace of a second refusal. I am ready to acknowledge to Miss Douglass and to the world my undiminished love for her, somewhat proud, it may be, of my power of appreciating her noble qualities of n and heart, and of continuing constant to that ap when I had no hope of ever winning for myself a place in

her regard; but I shrink from annoying her by my pertinacity, and still more from inflicting on her sensitive nature the pain which I am sure she would feel in causing suffering to another. Besides, while my hope is, as I have said, too dear to be easily silenced, it is scarcely strong enough to give me courage for such an appeal after an unqualified dismissal. I only seek from you what may inspire me with this courage. I do not ask to be assured of the *certainty* of success before I again offer to her my once rejected heart; I only desire to know that some change has taken place in the circumstances which then made success *impossible*. Will you endeavor to obtain for me this important information? For the same reasons which deter me from a personal application to Miss Douglass, I would prefer, if possible, that you should do so without referring to this communication; but in this as in all else connected with it, I commit myself to your discretion.

I shall await your reply with such solicitude as we experience only when the heart's strongest earthly desire hangs wavering in the balance,—yet hesitate not to tell me the truth, however painful, for I am not ignorant that from the wreck of his most cherished hopes the Christian often wins a peace that passeth understanding, and for which all that the world calls happiness may well be exchanged. May this peace be ours!

Believe me, dear Madam, with sincere esteem and regard,

Your friend and servant,

H. FALCONER.

Unfortunately Mrs. Stuart had left New York before this letter arrived there. It was forwarded to her, but as the mails were not delivered with very exact punctuality at the country place in which she was, her answer was

necessarily delayed long beyond the period at which it had been expected. It came at last, however, just as Mr. Falconer had despaired of it, and was hesitating whether to write again or to trust only to a personal interview with Mrs. Stuart. When it was received it brought little satisfaction. Mrs. Stuart thanked him warmly for his confidence, expressed the deepest interest in the subject of his letter, and assured him of her warmest wishes for his success; more she could not venture to do till she had seen Isabel, and it would probably be a fortnight, at least, before her return to the city would enable her to do that. The fortnight passed away, another and another week slowly and heavily followed it, and still Mr. Falconer learned, by occasional inquiries from Captain Stuart, that his mother was detained in the country. At length, when March was near its close, another letter arrived for him, written on board a steamboat bound from Hartford to New York. In this letter, Mrs. Stuart, after regretting her necessarily prolonged delay, informed him that she hoped the next day to be once more at home, and that she should, by mailing her letter on the way from the steamboat to her own house, give him the earliest and most positive assurance of her arrival.

Her letter proceeded thus: "I should not have written to you again until I had seen Miss D———, and could give you some information on the subject with which our correspondence commenced; but circumstances have lately been made known to me, of which I consider it right to give you immediate information, as they may exert some influence over your decisions." Mrs. Stuart here communicated the disastrous and total failure in business of Mr. Elliot, and the consequent surrender of his property, and change in his style of life. "Of so much," she continued, "I have been for some time aware, having learned

it from Isabel herself; but yesterday, for the first time, I received from another correspondent the additional intelligence, that the fortune of Miss Douglass had been swept away in the wreck of her uncle's; so small a pittance remaining, that she has withdrawn with him, to what my informant calls 'very mean lodgings,' and is engaged in giving music lessons for her support. I well understand why my generous Isabel has not given me this full revelation; she knew that it would render my submission to the unavoidable circumstances that kept me absent from her, more difficult and painful. I have said that I thought it right to make this communication to you immediately, because it might influence your decisions. It is true, that I do not believe it will; yet there are points in the position of each person known only to himself, which may greatly modify the conduct proper to him in any given case. Under this conviction, while I shall endeavor to obtain the insight into the feelings of my friend which you desire, my efforts shall be made in such a manner as in no degree to compromise you."

Mrs. Stuart was mistaken; her intelligence did greatly influence Mr. Falconer's decisions. Even before he finished reading her letter, he had determined to set out for New York with the least possible delay; that if he received any encouragement from her, he might not lose an hour in presenting to Isabel the suit which had become more than ever important to him: or, if his own hopes were destined to disappointment, that he might claim the right of a friend to serve her: or, at least, if nothing else was permitted him, that by aiding Mr. Elliot to re-establish himself in business, he might indirectly promote her happiness. Having found, by reference to his watch, that it was too late for him to hope to reach that day's stage or steamboat, he determined to set out early next morning, and immediately

communicated this intention to his mother. Mrs. Falconer's was a generous nature. In Isabel's misfortunes she almost forgot her offences, and the sympathy she expressed for her, and the commendation she bestowed on her conduct, as reported by Mrs. Stuart, was pleasant music to her son's ears.

As he rose from his dinner, which was always served at three o'clock, Mr. Falconer ordered his horse. "I will ride over to the fort," he said to Mrs. Falconer: "Captain Stuart or Lieutenant Elliot may have some packages which they would rather intrust to me than to the mails."

"By the by, Hubert, we have not seen young Elliot here lately; ask him if he is too much engrossed by Miss Duncan to call occasionally on an older friend. Tell him he is too great a favorite with me to be given up so easily."

Mr. Falconer bent down and pressed his lips to his mother's forehead. He loved the spirit which made Marion an especial favorite as soon as she heard of his father's misfortunes.

Five miles of good, firm road, were soon passed over by a fleet horse and a fearless rider, and Mr. Falconer stood in Captain Stuart's quarters in half an hour from the time he left his own door. Captain Stuart was seated at a table, on which a large chart was spread out; and the book he held in his hand was one of the latest on the tactics of his profession. He threw it down to offer his hand to his friend; but, though his greeting was cordial, no smile visited his lips. The lines of his face had become sterner than of old, and his deep-set eyes had lost the expression of tenderness that formerly lightened their gravity. To Mr. Falconer's inquiries for Marion, he replied, that he had ridden over to Mr. Duncan's.

"Poor fellow!" said Mr. Falconer, "how does he bear his father's reverse of fortune?"

"As he bears every thing—lightly. There are some natures that rise like cork to the top of the wave, let it roll as heavily as it will. Once satisfied that the change in his circumstances would not affect his connection with Miss Duncan, and Marion seemed to care little about it."

"I am sorry to learn that Mr. Elliot's misfortunes will press so heavily on his niece,"—the sudden flushing of Captain Stuart's face made Mr. Falconer add the name he had avoided—"Miss Douglass."

"I cannot understand, from Isabel's letter to Marion, how she should have become entangled in her uncle's affairs; however, she will not suffer long, if Mr. Elliot's opinion be correct. Did you ever meet Foster—I mean him of the firm of Reese, Foster & Company?"

"No."

"He is one of our princely merchants—princely, at least, in wealth; a man of about Mr. Elliot's age, with nothing like his graces of person or manner, and yet he writes to Marion with great exultation of his friend's devotion to Isabel, and of Isabel's pleased acceptance of his attentions. So it seems she is a true woman after all, and loves the gewgaws of life as well as the rest of her sex."

For a moment, Mr. Falconer's brow had contracted, and he had shrunk as from a sudden blow, at Walter Stuart's confident assertion of another's devotion to Isabel, and her acceptance of it; but her face, so full of noble thought and feeling, seemed to look on him from the distant corner of the room on which he had fixed his eyes, and there was reproachful sadness in its calm, earnest expression. It seemed to accuse him of injustice, in believing for a moment even, that she could be won by sordid wealth; and with unusual warmth of manner, he replied, after a short pause, to Captain Stuart, "It would take much to convince me that Miss Douglass could be influenced by a low and

sordid passion. The soul that looks out from her lovely, serious face, is one of true nobility."

His eyes kindled; his face flushed with enthusiasm.

"You admire her greatly," said Captain Stuart, looking at him with some surprise.

"I do more than admire; I love her."

It was an unpremeditated confession drawn from him, as a sort of *amende* for one moment's ungenerous doubt.

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Captain Stuart, "and why then have you not married her?"

Mr. Falconer hesitated only for a moment, and then, with a heightened color, replied, "Because she did not love me."

Captain Stuart looked fixedly at him for a moment, seemed about to speak, then cast his eyes down in thoughtful silence, and at last asked, "Falconer, are you sure of what you say?"

"As sure as her rejection of my suit can make me."

"This is very strange; yet why should I say so of any caprice in woman; but when did this happen?"

"In July last; the very day I left Mr. Elliot's house to return to Virginia."

"And in the following October I could have sworn that if ever woman loved with her heart's full devotion, it was Isabel Douglass, and that you were the object of that love."

Mr. Falconer's heart was throbbing audibly, and the blood rushed through his veins with lightning speed. As soon as he could command his voice, he asked, "On what did you found this opinion?"

Captain Stuart related the incident, which, it may be remembered, occurred at Mr. Elliot's breakfast table, when Marion announced the death of Mr. Falconer. After describing Isabel's agitation at the announcement, and her sudden fainting as she received the assurance that it related

not to Hubert Falconer, but to his uncle, he concluded with these words, "If ever agony and ecstasy were expressed by a human face, it was by hers at the moment she received the idea of your death, and at that in which she caught the assurance of your safety."

"And why have you not told me this before?"

"Because I should have thought it dishonorable to do so, while I had no reason to believe that you regarded her with any preference."

There was a long silence; and Mr. Falconer had risen to depart, before he remembered the object of his visit. Captain Stuart proposed to send over to him, at a later hour of the evening, his own letters and Marion's, and the friends parted. The heart of the one was stung by bitter memories aroused from their coil by this conversation, while the pulses of the other were beating high with joyous anticipation. There was a glad sound in Mr. Falconer's voice that evening; a brightness in his eyes that told of unclouded happiness within. In no other way did he express the feelings excited by Walter Stuart's revelations; they were too sacred for common speech.

Mrs. Stuart found Isabel and Mr. Elliot far more comfortably situated than her friend's "very mean lodgings" would have led her to believe. It is true they were in —— street, where no fashionable foot was ever known to tread, except it might be in search of a cheap bargain, and that the walls of their rooms were of a dingy yellow, and that the windows had old-fashioned, heavy wooden shutters, instead of the modern, light venetian blind. But Isabel having had her uncle's permission to take any thing she wished, for them, from their former home, had furnished them prettily and genteelly, yet not with articles so elegant or expensive as to seem out of place. The back room was her uncle's sleeping apartment, and was fitted up with all

the comforts to which he had been accustomed. She slept in a small inner room, scarcely larger than a good-sized pantry, which, by a skilful management of space, was made to accommodate her bedstead, bureau, and the necessaries of the toilette. She might have found its confined limits somewhat stifling, but for opening at night the door by which it communicated with the front room, which she had furnished as a parlor. Here, a comfortable chintz-covered sofa, two or three lounging chairs, a pretty work-table, a few pots of flowers, and the muslin draperies lined with rose-colored cambric, which had formerly shaded the windows of her chamber, gave an air both of cheerfulness and comfort to the apartment. Here Mr. Elliot, for the first time since he left the home of his boyhood, was beginning to taste that domestic happiness which his heart craved. Isabel's mornings were generally devoted to her pupils, but her afternoons and evenings were free; and her uncle enjoyed with a gentle "home-felt delight," long unknown to him, her cheerful and affectionate companionship. Until Mrs. Stuart's arrival, Mr. Foster had been their most frequent visiter. He had been cheerfully welcomed by Isabel for her uncle's sake, and for the sake of the kindness which he had shown them, which she, at least, never suspected to proceed from a selfish motive. Soon after Mrs. Stuart's arrival, however, he revealed such a motive. Isabel listened to his suit with almost as much surprise as regret. She would fain have persuaded both him and herself that he could regard her with no other love than that of a father; in return for which she would readily have promised a daughter's grateful and respectful affection; but Mr. Foster was not to be so persuaded, and applied to Mr. Elliot to convince her that it was quite certain he felt, and not impossible that he should inspire, a warmer emotion. Mr. Elliot's eloquence was exerted in vain, and Mrs.

Stuart, in the afternoon, found him still insisting on Mr. Foster's excellent character and great wealth, and Isabel, weary of the discussion, listening to him in silence, but with no less determination. She was welcomed by both as an ally.

"I am glad to see you, Mrs. Stuart," exclaimed Mr. Elliot, "you will help me to persuade this silly girl, that a good husband, who can give her one of the handsomest establishments in New York, is not to be refused without a moment's thought."

"And I am sure," said Isabel, as she received and returned her friend's affectionate greeting, "that you will agree with me, that the man whom you could reject without a moment's thought, no thought should induce you to accept."

"Well! but, Isabel—"

"Well; but, my dear uncle, are you so weary of me, that you are not willing I should stay with you, whom I prefer a thousand times to Mr. Foster and his handsome establishment?"

"My dear child!" said Mr. Elliot, kissing the forehead she had rested on his shoulder, "you know that cannot be, for you make my home so pleasant to me, that, were it not for the thought that I have injured you, I should be perfectly happy."

"And I am conscious of no injury, while you will let me live in this pleasant home with you."

"You are an obstinate girl," replied Mr. Elliot, with a smile, "and I must go and advise poor Foster to have nothing to do with you."

"And so you have refused Mr. Foster," said Mrs. Stuart, when Mr. Elliot had left them alone together; "pray, tell me if you have made a vow of celibacy?"

"Do you think Mr. Foster so very irresistible, that noth-

ing less binding than a vow could prevent my accepting him ?"

"No, not quite irresistible, though his establishment offers great temptations," said Mrs. Stuart, with a smile: "but Mr. Foster is only one of many ; there was young Lewiston."

"An empty-headed coxcomb."

"And Woodly."

"Who thinks he proves his manliness by swearing at his mother and sister."

"And Coningsby ; what can you say against him ?"

"Nothing ; he is an amiable, excellent man ; but not to my taste."

"And Mr. Falconer ; was he not to your taste either ?"

The gay, careless countenance, which Isabel had worn during this conversation, became suddenly grave, her eyes fell, and her cheeks—nay, her very temples—were crimsoned ; but she uttered not a word ?

"No excuse, I see. Pardon an old woman's curiosity ; and pray, tell me, Isabel, in what he failed to please you ?"

Isabel did not speak.

"Forgive me ; I see I am taking too great a liberty," said Mrs. Stuart, gravely.

"Oh, no, dear friend ! that cannot be ;" and Isabel placed her hand in Mrs. Stuart's, and continued, though in a low and faltering voice, without daring to meet her eye, "when Mr. Falconer addressed me, I believed—I had reason to believe, that Grace—that if I accepted him, it would make Grace very unhappy—"

"Surely, Isabel," interrupted Mrs. Stuart, impatiently, "with your clear mind, you did not yield to so false a sentiment, as to suppose that it was generous to sacrifice not only your own happiness, but his too, to a fancy of Grace ?"

"I had no choice," said Isabel, while her bosom heaved,

and her eyes filled, "I had promised my dear aunt, before I left Georgia, that the happiness of Grace should be more anxiously cared for by me, than my own; that I would esteem no sacrifice too great, by which that happiness could be promoted."

Tears were falling from Isabel's burning cheeks.

"My poor child!" said Mrs. Stuart, tenderly, "it was a rash, a cruel vow."

"Do not say cruel, for I made it unasked; it was rash, but I had vowed it, and I must keep it, though to my own hurt."

Mr. Elliot's step was heard below, and Isabel flew to her room to bathe her eyes, and remove the traces of tears, lest they should distress him.

It was but two days after this conversation, that Isabel received another visit from her friend; but this time she came not alone, and her companion was Mr. Falconer. Had not Mr. Elliot been absorbed by his own embarrassment at receiving Mr. Falconer in so different a style from that in which he had been accustomed to do it, he could not have failed to perceive the quick rush of blood to the very temples of Isabel, and the nervous start which spoke her agitation. Nor is it probable that the eager glance with which Mr. Falconer read these signs of emotion, nor the lingering pressure of her hand, which betrayed his own revived hope, would have escaped his notice. Mrs. Stuart, however, allowed him little time for observation, for she entered at once into rapid and earnest conversation with him on some affair of business, and before he had time to wonder at the silence of their companions, she had proposed to him to walk with her to a house which she had seen advertised in the morning paper, and which she had some thought of renting for the ensuing year. Mr. Elliot glanced hesitatingly at Mr. Falconer.

"Mr. Falconer will excuse us, I know," said Mrs. Stuart; "we shall not be gone more than an hour, and Isabel will entertain him till our return."

Mr. Falconer assented, and was soon left alone with her whom he had loved so long, and for many months so hopelessly. Isabel strove in vain to throw off the embarrassing consciousness which had oppressed her from the moment of his entrance. The silence grew every instant more awkward, yet he spoke not; and for her, she could not speak. At length, after what seemed to her many minutes, though the sound of the hall door, just then closing after Mrs. Stuart and Mr. Elliot, told that it was scarcely one, with a determined effort she looked up and said, "I hope—" but her eyes fell beneath his, and the unfinished sentence died on her lips, as he rose and approached her.

"Isabel," he said, in those low, deep tones, which she had heard once before, and never forgotten, "I have never ceased to love, yet I would scarcely have dared to tell you so, had I not been encouraged by our friend, Mrs. Stuart, to hope." He paused, but she was silent, motionless, except as her whole frame palpitated with the quick throbbing of her heart. "Isabel," he resumed, yet more earnestly, "I have heard of your vow and its consequences; will you not confirm the hope thus kindled? Only tell me, that but for that vow, you would have been—and yet that will not satisfy me; tell me rather that now—*now* you will be mine."

There was another upward glance, another vain attempt at speech, from Isabel; but an Italian poet has said,

"Chi arrossisse e se tace parla assai,"*

and Mr. Falconer probably thought so too, for his next words were murmured in her ear, as he bent forward and clasped her for one instant to his bosom.

* She who has blushed and is silent, says enough.

Before Mr. Elliot and Mrs. Stuart returned, Mr. Falconer had won from Isabel the acknowledgment, that the performance of her vow had not been without a great effort and a bitter pang. How far the joy of the present overpaid that pang, she could not have told him, if she would; that dear knowledge he must gather for himself, not from what she revealed, but from what she could not repress. Each moment increased the fulness of her content, as the expression of feelings tender, yet manly, in words ardent, yet respectful, gave her added conviction of the superiority both in mind and heart of him to whom she had committed the happiness of her life. There came no disturbing influences from without, to trouble this inward joy. Mr. Elliot heard of their engagement with a pleasure shadowed only by the memory which conscience kept alive in his heart, of the wrong he had done to Isabel; and Aunt Nancy, in reply to a letter from Isabel, to which Mr. Falconer had added a few affectionate and respectful lines, sent them her tenderest blessing, and most earnest prayers for their happiness. She would gladly,—she wrote—if possible, visit them in Virginia, during the summer, as Mr. Falconer had requested, but if she could not, she would be happy in the hope which he had given her, that she should see them in her own home, the next winter.

Mr. Elliot one day inquired of Mr. Falconer when he should return to Virginia.

"You must ask Isabel," was the smiling reply, "I shall go as soon as she is ready; I hope it will be in time for Marion's wedding, and that you will go with us."

A few days after there came a letter for Isabel, from Mrs. Falconer, enclosed in one to her son.

"Sealed, you perceive," said Mr. Falconer, as he handed it to her, "so I have had no means of judging what cruel revelations it may contain. No; do not put it away,

Isabel, read it at once, I pray you, that I may know all I have to fear."

He took up a book, and appeared engrossed in its pages until she had opened her letter and begun to read, and then his eyes were fastened on her face, reading there every emotion, as it arose in her mind. Soon large tears rose to her eyes, and fell silently and slowly down her cheeks.

"Isabel, you weep!" exclaimed Mr. Falconer, drawing near to her.

"If I do," said she, as she yielded her hand to him, "it is because my heart is so full of happiness; I too have a mother!" and she pressed her lips to the signature, and placed the letter in his hand.

It was a letter which it delighted him to read. Mrs. Falconer addressed Isabel as her daughter; and said, that in giving her one, and one whom she so perfectly approved, Heaven had granted the last earthly wish of her heart.

"Do not, my dear child," she continued, "delay our happiness—my Hubert's and mine, and may I not say yours too—from any false delicacy, or mere ceremonies. The old grow covetous even of hours. I would gladly hasten our meeting by coming to you, were it possible. It would gratify my warmest desires to be near you and my dear Hubert when you take the solemn marriage-vow; to let my heart go up in prayer for you, from the very altar at which you knelt; but there are obligations resting on me here which forbid it, and I must not even think of it, lest I should be ungrateful enough to repine for that one drop wanting in my cup."

"I wish my mother could come to us," said Mr. Falconer, as he read this passage, "but I fear it is impossible."

"Is it impossible that—that we should go to her?" faltered Isabel, turning away from him her crimsoned cheek, as she spoke.

"And would you go to her, my Isabel? that would indeed be a kind thought."

"Is she not my mother too?" asked Isabel.

And thus it was arranged, in spite of the exclamations of wonder, and more grave expressions of disapprobation from many of Isabel's acquaintances. Such a thing, they assured her, was contrary to all custom; *it would be thought* very strange; they were afraid *people would say* that it was a departure from womanly delicacy and propriety; but Isabel read over Mrs. Falconer's letter, listened to Mr. Falconer's expressions of grateful tenderness, and kept her resolution, feeling that she was surrendering a mere conventionalism to the dictates of a true and pure affection. The suns and showers of April had not passed away, when, attended by Mrs. Stuart, who, at Mr. Falconer's urgent request, had consented to accompany her, and by Mr. Elliot, she set out for the home of him, whom she had chosen as the companion of her life-journey.

It was a day of glowing sunshine, tempered by cool, soft breezes, when the little party, having slept the preceding night at a town about twenty miles distant from Mr. Falconer's home, arrived at ten o'clock in the morning at the point to which carriages had been sent to await them. Here they diverged from the stage route, and pursued for eight miles a road leading past gentlemen's residences. At length, through a large and handsome gate, they entered an avenue of stately trees, from which stretched off on either side a lawn dotted with clumps of oak and elms. The avenue swept around the end of the house, and then before them was the tranquil and majestic James River. Isabel scarcely saw it, for her eyes were riveted on the form of her, who, having heard their approach, already stood in the piazza waiting to receive her. If in all her journey she had had a moment's misgiving of the heart, a

moment's unpleasant remembrance of what *people would think* and *people would say*, it must have been forgotten, when she felt the tears on Mrs. Falconer's cheek, as she folded her in her arms as her cherished daughter, and thanked her again and again for the happiness she was giving her.

Already a clergyman was in the house; one of Mr. Falconer's oldest and dearest friends, to whom he had written from New York. In the evening Captain Stuart and Marion Elliot, Mr. and Miss Duncan, and a few other well-known and tenderly-regarded friends of Mr. and Mrs. Falconer, were assembled, and in their presence Isabel, her loveliness refined and exalted by high and pure feeling, stood beside the stronger, bolder, yet not nobler being to whom she had given her heart's first affections, and with that heart's full consent, spoke those solemn words which made her his forever.

CHAPTER XVII.

"There is a calm for those who weep;
A rest for weary pilgrims found.
They softly lie and sweetly sleep
Low in the ground."

Montgomery.

Four years passed rapidly away with Isabel, and in the serenity of her brow, and the glad light of her eyes, we may read that they have been happy years. One fear only has troubled her peace; one sorrow clouded her life. The fear has been lest earth should become too attractive to her soul; the sorrow has been for the companion—the

sister of her early years. The friends of Grace have seldom heard directly from her; but all the intelligence received of her from others, has represented her as absorbed in the frivolities of the most frivolous circle in Paris. Mrs. Elliot remained with her for more than three years, and was at last driven home only by terror—the terror of another French Revolution.

The memorable three days of July, 1830, had left Mrs. Elliot capable of but one idea—that there was a French Revolution; and from a French Revolution she thought none could escape too rapidly. She was no sooner convinced, therefore, that it was possible to travel with safety, than she made her way to the seacoast, and from thence to America. She had arrived in New York in September, and, in the following February, made her first visit in Virginia to her daughter-in-law, the former Miss Duncan, and to Isabel.

From her aunt, Isabel found it impossible to learn any thing of that inner life in Grace, which most interested her; yet she was the favorite subject of her conversation. She represented her as the presiding divinity of Parisian festivities, and her memory was stored with the compliments of persons of distinction to "La belle Marquise." She had even taken copies of some truly French verses addressed to Grace on various occasions, by some of her many adorers. But all this did not satisfy Isabel's desires for one so dear.

"Is Grace happy in her married life?" she asked one day of her aunt.

"Happy!" repeated Mrs. Elliot, probably puzzled by the application of so homely a word to a Marquise, a belle, and a *bel esprit*.

"Yes; is the Marquis affectionate to her, and does she love him?"

"Oh! to be sure. He is very kind to her; lets her have as much money as she wants, and asks no questions about it; indeed, I do not think he ever attempts to control her in any thing."

"I am not sure she is the happier for that; it is so pleasant to be directed by one we love."

Isabel glanced almost unconsciously across the room, where Mr. Falconer sat writing a letter. He must have anticipated that glance, for he looked up at the same moment, and, as their eyes met, a smile as tender as that with which he first hailed her his, passed over his face. It was some minutes before Isabel spoke again; when she did, it was to observe, "You say Grace's little girl looks like her."

"Her very image; she is a beautiful creature, and Grace dresses her splendidly, and takes her out a great deal. Several artists have taken sketches of the mother and daughter together, and they have been painted as Venus and Cupid, and as the Madonna and Child."

Again Mr. Falconer ahd Isabel exchanged glances; but this time there was an arch expression in their smiles, provoked by the singular medley of characters thus presented.

"As Grace is so much attached to her child, I suppose, aunt, she has become more domestic since its birth."

"Why should she, with excellent nurses and attendants of all sorts? That is an American idea, and would be thought decidedly vulgar abroad. Grace was in some danger of falling into it at first; she was quite determined to nurse her own baby, but the fancy was so ridiculed by every one who heard of it, that she soon gave it up. Indeed, it would have been quite impossible, as she soon found, to fulfil the two characters of a lady of fashion and a nursing mother."

"And she did not nurse her child!" exclaimed Isabel, with a feeling of pity for her.

"How will the change of government affect the Marquis?" asked Mr. Falconer, for the first time taking part in the conversation.

"I do not know; but, from some hints he let fall before I came away, I fear very injuriously. I suspect a considerable part of his income was derived from his place at court."

"With such a fortune as that of Grace," said Isabel, "they can never fear want."

"I do not know that," said Mrs. Elliot, quietly; "the Marquis spends a great deal of money at play, and I think Grace herself sometimes plays higher than is quite prudent. Isabel, do tell me what that shrub is which stands directly opposite to this window; I thought it was a camelia from a distance, but as I came near it this morning I found that the flowers gave out a very rich perfume."

Isabel could not answer, she was absorbed in one thought. Grace play! Grace a female gamester! her soul recoiled from the terrible idea.

"Oh, Aunt Elliot! surely you do not mean that Grace plays for money," she exclaimed.

"Why, what a novice you are!" ejaculated Mrs. Elliot with a laugh. "Did you expect her to live in Paris and not play? Everybody plays there, though to be sure everybody does not play so high as Grace does; I tried to make her moderate her stakes, but she said she only played for the excitement, and there would be none of that if she did not play high."

Tears were streaming down Isabel's cheeks. That last expression betrayed so much unhappiness, such an unresting spirit, that her heart was full of a pity too tender, too sorrowful for words. Mr. Falconer rose from his writing-table, and left the room. In a few minutes he returned, leading by the hand a boy between two and three years

old, on whose bright, beautiful face, his own high, brave spirit seemed to have stamped itself. The young Elliot, for so the boy was named, sprang forward, holding up a branch of the wild jessamine, covered with its fragrant yellow clusters, and exclaiming, "See, mamma, what beautiful flowers I picked for you! Maumer would not let me bring them to you, because she said you were asleep, till papa came for me. Good papa! I love papa."

Mr. Falconer bent down to kiss the child, who was leaning on his mother's lap, and, as he did so, whispered to Isabel, "You must exercise some of good Aunt Nancy's faith, love! I doubt not that she is right, and that Grace will yet *come home to us*, in the best sense of the words."

The boy had caught the whispered name, and he cried, "Where's my sister Grace? mamma, please to let me see my sister Grace."

As Mr. Falconer rose from his bending position, he saw that his mother had entered and was standing beside a cradle, not far removed from the large cushioned chair in which Isabel reclined.

"Ask grandmamma to show you little sister," he said.

The boy bounded to the elder Mrs. Falconer's side, and with a kiss which a grandmother's heart could not resist, preferred his request. "But Elliot must be very still," she said, "or he will wake little sister, and she will worry mamma, and that would worry grandmamma very much."

This warning was intended for more than Elliot, for the quick eye of affection had detected traces of disturbance in the countenance of Isabel, and Mrs. Falconer feared that Mrs. Elliot had been making some painful, and, in her present state, imprudent communication to her. As far as it concerned the three weeks old occupant of the cradle, the warning was needless—she was already awake, and as the silken curtain was drawn aside, she turned her

dark blue eyes upon her visiters, and a smile dimpled the fair, round cheek that rested on one soft, rosy palm—a mark of precocity which elicited many exclamations of delight.

Isabel glanced from this lovely cherub to the almost baby brother bending over her with such proud affection in his face, to the still stately form of her who had taken her so tenderly to her mother-heart, and then to him, dearer than all, who continued standing near her with his hand resting on the arm of her chair. She laid her hand upon it, and, as he cast his eyes down to her, the smile upon her upturned face told him that even the sorrows of Grace had been forgotten in her own joy. It was a joy which had its seat deep in the heart. It had in it no glare, no pomp, nothing to attract the common eye. Its very existence might have been overlooked by the worldly heart. Its source was in the simple, and true, and pure affections of our nature—affections whose legitimate tendency is to their Author; whose perfect development is found in heaven.

And how had these four years influenced the character and happiness of Grace? Mrs. Elliot's conversation has given some faint shadowing of their effect, and we can only add to it a brief and rapid sketch. We parted from her on the deck of the packet which was bearing her, as she fondly hoped, to a new life—not a life of new principles, but of new scenes. And for a time these charmed to sleep the serpents of disappointed affections and a dissatisfied conscience. She found herself the mistress of a hotel in the Faubourg St. Germains, whose large, lofty, and richly decorated, though somewhat gloomy apartments, reawakened that pride in the nobility of the ancient family of De Villeneuve, which the personal qualities of the present Marquis had nearly extinguished. She loved to look at the old and

faded tapestry, still preserved in one or two little-used apartments—on the few portraits existing of distant ancestors, and to listen to the legends which the Marquis, gratified with this homage to his consequence, endeavored to recall to his memory. Before this novel emotion had wholly ceased to please, Grace found herself immersed in the gayeties of Paris, the metropolis of pleasures. The Marquis had obtained a place at court, which made a not unwelcome addition to the income derived from his already burdened estate, and conferred on him the honor of a near approach to royalty. Grace was fêted and flattered; men of *ton* made scarcely covert love to her; men of art sought her patronage; her name gave fashion to a dress; to have taken her portrait gave success to a painter. Was she happy? We know not—perhaps she knew not herself—for happiness is of the heart, and she had no time to look within; but neither had she time for painful thought. She was intoxicated, and quaffed yet deeper and deeper the Circean cup. She had not yet exhausted the novelties of her position, and though each day some pleasure ceased to charm, some hitherto untasted delight supplied its place. To an observant eye one fact would have been painfully evident—that each new step was on a downward course, leading her farther from the principles of her early home. *Principles* did we say? Alas! principles Grace had none—we should have said, leading her farther from its sympathies, for these governed the life of Grace; and over these her present associates, by gratifying her vanity and contributing to her enjoyment, were acquiring every day new power. But her early affections found a potent ally, when they most required it, in her child, the little Nanine. All the emotions which she excited were linked with her home; and as Grace held her to her bosom, and thought how dear she would have been to her father, to her aunt, to Isabel,

their lessons came back to her heart, and she felt herself strong to act in accordance with those lessons, resisting all counter influences. But this strength was only an impulse, dying with the emotions that gave it birth; and when, on her recovery, her former associates gathered around her, they resumed their empire over her life. A period was approaching, however, which was to try the strength of their devotion and of her endurance.

The Marquis de Villeneuve had deeply pledged his estates and property of every kind to support his passion for play. On the income of his place at court, and on that derived from the property of Grace, he lived and supported the expenses of his *ménage*. This last property would doubtless have been sacrificed to his pleasures or to hers, but the terms of their marriage settlement made it impossible for them to alienate it during the nonage of their child. The revolution in France, by taking from the Marquis de Villeneuve his place at court, left him solely dependent upon the income of that property. Grown desperate at the difficulties crowding upon him, he played higher and drank deeper than ever, and five months after that revolution, his life of unrest and feverish anxiety was terminated by an acute inflammation. This event aroused Grace from that *ennui* which satiety begets, when, wearied of ourselves and all around us, we long for change, come from what quarter it will. Yet this change was terrible. Dread, awe rather than sorrow, filled her soul. She had cared little for the Marquis de Villeneuve, but he had been her husband, and his death brought her very near, not to the spiritual world, but to the dark and terrible grave, from whose contemplation she shrank with a shuddering soul. Happy would it have been for her, had some one now been near who would have pointed her to the light beyond it! But there was none, and Grace sought the only refuge from painful

thought which her position afforded her with more avidity than ever.

The laws of France, which permitted no entailment of property on a woman, left to the wife and child of De Villeneuve nothing that had once been his. Even the Hotel de Villeneuve was sold to liquidate the debts of its former possessor, and Grace retired with her child to lighter, gayer, though less grand apartments in the Rue Rivoli. The change was favorable to her spirits and her health, which had begun to suffer from the gloomy associations with her last abode. Rigidly observant of decorum, Grace denied herself those amusements abroad, which seemed inconsistent with her condition as a widow of a few months; but she received her friends at home—only her *friends*—but these were enough for the graceful *tableau*, the gay proverb and charade, or the more exciting, to Grace, the soul-engrossing pleasures of *écarté*. The ten thousand dollars, to which the income of her well-managed property in the United States had now risen, enabled Grace still to command all accustomed luxuries. The world again looked smilingly upon her. Her title, it is true, passed for little in the new world which the Revolution had created; but beauty, and wit, and grace, would win her honors, while wealth procured for her a place for their display. What, however, are thousands and tens of thousands to one who games? Grace lost far oftener than she won; she was not cool enough for *écarté*, said the practised players; and one night, or rather morning, for so long had she striven with fortune that the dawn of another day was visible in the east, she signed a check on her banker for the last thousand dollars in his hands, when she knew that nearly ten months must elapse before he could receive another deposite for her. But he had been her banker for years, he knew the certainty of her receipts, and he agreed—*for a*

consideration—to give her credit during the current year for five thousand dollars more. For a week or two, trembling at past peril, Grace avoided the gaming-table; but time softened the memory of danger, and the abstinence which had only this for its foundation, was at an end. The history is common; the conclusion easily foreseen. In one month Grace was again penniless. But this last five thousand dollars, or the greater part of it, had been won by one who valued a bond on his lovely debtor beyond all price, and he would not accept it; he urged upon her the means of winning back what she had lost, and she, in her madness, consented to increase her obligations to him. Do you wonder at this? She was only following out the principle of her life—doing as those nearest her did, and making frantic efforts to retain that on which their consideration depended. She failed in these efforts; again and again her *generous and disinterested* creditor supplied her exhausted purse. At length, secure, as he believed, of his prey, he claimed his reward. But he had been mistaken; the prayers, the lessons, the holy influences of the first fifteen years of her life were not so fruitless as to leave Grace capable of a degradation so deep as that. She who had known a pure love could not barter even its seeming for wealth. Aghast with horror, she looked for the first time on all around her with an eye conscious of the truth. All was dark; all hideous. In her crowded saloons she saw no friend; none on whom she could lean in this hour of extremity. In the moment of her indignant rejection of his overtures, she had freed herself of her dangerous creditor by a loan obtained on ruinous terms—terms which left her nothing to expect from her income for two succeeding years. And now she felt, for the first time in her life, alone—alone, "without hope and without God in the world." And yet she was not all alone—her child was there, mer-

cifully there, to bind her still to the life from which she might otherwise have fled, unbidden, in her anguish. Her child aroused the dormant energies of her nature. She sold her jewels and most of her furniture, and retired with one servant to cheaper, but not uncomfortable lodgings—more comfortable, indeed, than those to which Isabel went with her uncle, and where, with an untroubled conscience, and a heart full of faith in Heaven, she had been happy even before earthly love came to shed its light upon the scene; but Grace had not an untroubled conscience or faith in Heaven, and her life was spent in vain and bitter regrets. Among these regrets, no penitent thought bewailed her ingratitude to God,—hers was the selfish sorrow of the world which worketh death, and her health failed rapidly under its influence. Her form lost its roundness, and her cheeks grew hollow; while the one bright spot upon them, her parched hands and fevered lips, would have betrayed but too surely to an experienced observer the approach of consumption. And now came the sick longing for one breath of her native air, one draught from the spring that had quenched her thirst in childhood, and a still deeper longing for one soothing, tender word from the voice that had lulled her to her childhood's sleep. These impulses were quickened by her perceiving with dismay how rapidly her store of this world's wealth was diminishing. "What will become of my Nanine, when all is gone; and if I should die here alone and leave her to strangers? Oh God! preserve me for my child! let me place her on the bosom on which my own childhood was pillowed!"

The mother in her heart had led her to the creature's best refuge in sorrow and in danger—prayer, and with prayer came humility, and she wrote to the friends from whom she had hitherto been most desirous to conceal the misery into which obedience to her own vain and selfish

impulses had plunged her. She wrote to Isabel and to her aunt, Miss Elliot: "Come to me! oh come to me! that I may place my child in your arms before I die!" was her despairing cry.

Miss Elliot, or Aunt Nancy as we prefer to call her, because we think the appellation harmonizes better with her kindly character, was making a visit of a few weeks to Isabel, as she had done every summer since her marriage, when these letters from Grace were received. Not a moment was lost in deliberation. On that very day Mr. Falconer wrote to New York to engage accommodations for Aunt Nancy and himself on board of the first packet that should sail from that port for Havre. Isabel he had convinced, against her pleadings and her heart, that she had a more difficult duty to perform—to be still and wait the event. All the necessities of the case would be met by Miss Elliot and himself, and her children could neither be left with propriety nor taken on so long a voyage with so little preparation as their hurried movements would permit. For the first time Isabel yielded to his wishes with reluctance. She and her aunt wept together over the sad transcript of the sorrows of Grace, yet in the midst of her tears Aunt Nancy lost not her faith.

"She is the child of prayer," she said, "and I felt that God would not leave her to herself. If He be bringing her back to Himself, as well as to us, though it be by a painful road, I will bless Him for it."

The sailing of the August packet from New York for Havre, was delayed for nearly a week by a gale of wind, and the voyage was longer than the average of voyages at that season. To poor Grace, who had counted each day, almost each hour, that must pass, before she could receive a letter, this delay was agony. She rose in the morning with the confident expectation that some response to the

appeal which it had so humbled her pride and torn her heart to make, would come to her that day. As the day wore on, expectation grew fainter with the lapse of every hour, until the evening found her exhausted by agitating emotions—sick from hope deferred—with only strength enough to weep over her child, and pray that she might be spared for the possibilities of another day. She was thus engaged one evening, when whispering voices on the stairs leading to her apartments, which were on the third story, attracted her attention. She listened with painful intentness, and cautious as were the whispers, her ear, sharpened by disease and anxiety, distinguished familiar tones. She bounded to the door, threw it open, and, with a voice that thrilled every hearer, called, "Here! here! Aunt Nancy."

The words were followed by a choking sound, which alarmed Mr. Falconer, and he sprang forward, leaving Miss Elliot to ascend alone from the last landing-place. When he reached Grace, she was leaning, apparently unconscious, against the doorway, and a crimson stream was issuing slowly from her lips, and falling over her white gown.

When Grace was restored to the full perception of all around her, she found herself in the resting-place for which she had so longed—her aunt's arms—while at her side stood a physician, one of the most highly esteemed in Paris, who had attended her in former days, but whom she had not dared to employ of late, lest his fees should exhaust her small store before aid could come to her from home. Mr. Falconer was seated at the foot of the bed, with the weeping Nanine in his arms, whom he was soothing with the tenderest pity. Grace turned her eyes slowly and languidly around, as if seeking for some one whom she hoped to see; and then, raising her hand feebly, held it to Mr. Falconer, and in low tones breathed forth, "Isabel."

Mr. Falconer drew near her with Nanine still in his arms, and affectionately clasping the hand she had offered him, said, "We could not both come, dear Grace; and Isabel consented to let me come with her aunt because she believed I could be more serviceable to her, and to you, than she could be; but her heart is with you."

Under skilful medical treatment, and tended with untiring love, Grace seemed for a time to amend rapidly; yet her physician early declared, that though there might be amendment, there could not be recovery in her case.

"We can only patch her up now," he said to Mr. Falconer, "and when that is done, her best hope is from change of climate: you must take her to Italy."

But the constant cry of Grace was, "Take me home! Oh, take me home!"

It was many weeks before it was possible to remove her at all; but these were precious weeks to Grace, and to those who loved her so tenderly. With the quick perception, we had almost said the intuition, which is sometimes evident in those who are approaching the spiritual world, she had divined the opinion which her physician was cautious never to express in her hearing. Grace had said before, to others and to herself, "I shall die;" but she had never believed it before; and it is a fearful thing to believe, while the heart, driven from earth, can yet find no rest above. Who can paint the bitterness of that self-reproach, with which she now looked back upon the sacrifices she had made to that insatiate craving for admiration and affection, for the first place in every circle and in every heart, which had been the bane of her life? She had sinned against her own purest and deepest affections. She had wasted her wealth and exhausted the very springs of her life, in her efforts to win the plaudits of the thoughtless and selfish crowds who had already forgotten her, and

for whose remembrance she had no desire. Had Grace been brought back to her early associations while life and its impulses were still strong within her; had she then been shut up as it were to the conversation and communion of persons as deeply imbued with religious feeling as those who now were ministering to her with such devotion, it might well have been doubted whether her interest in the highest and holiest truths was not prompted, at least in part, by this very principle, which had so extended its ramifications through her whole nature, that it exerted its influence without her own consciousness, and made her whole life—her inner as well as outer life—a seeming, not a being. But Grace stood now in the presence of eternity. All the veils and semblances with which earth had clothed her spirit, covering it from her own cognition, were falling from her; and dismayed at the view of herself, she sought on every side, with earnestness, yet almost with despair, for some regenerating influence, some rest for her perturbed conscience and agitated heart. And now she felt the full blessing of such friends as her gentle and pious aunt, and of one so faithful, so fearless, yet so tender as Mr. Falconer. Day by day, the truths taught in her childhood, and never wholly obliterated from her mind, were brought by their judicious presentation of them, into nearer contact with her heart; and her heart yielded to their empire. Grace became watchful over herself; anxious most of all to satisfy the demands of her awakened conscience, to please Him who seeth the inmost recesses of the heart, and to live in communion of soul with the Divine Saviour of men.

When Grace left Paris in January, she looked out from the windows of her carriage upon its splendid palaces, its showy shops, its gay gardens and Boulevards,—the scenes of her most brilliant and triumphant hours,—with a serene

countenance and an untroubled heart. She would not have exchanged one hour of that blessed calm, which faith and love had diffused through her soul, for another life, longer than her past had been, of such vain triumphs and restless gayety; restless, because ever seeking and never finding—grasping at pleasures which, like Dead Sea fruits, fell to ashes at her touch.

The physicians who had been consulted by Mr. Falconer had all assured him that it was very desirable to avoid taking Grace into a cold latitude, if he would gratify what seemed to be her strongest earthly wish—to die at home. He had accordingly, with great effort, procured a good vessel to sail in January directly for Savannah. As soon as the day of their sailing was appointed, he wrote to Isabel, communicating their arrangements, and requesting her to set out for Oakdale—the name of her early home—as soon as possible after receiving his letter. "Come, my dear wife," he wrote, "and bring our children with you, if you can. I long to hold you all once more to my heart, my impatient heart; yet I cannot leave this dear Grace—who becomes every hour dearer and lovelier—while she needs me."

It will not be doubted that Isabel complied with this request; she was only too happy to have his sanction for obeying the impulses of her own heart. She was at Oakdale ten days before Mr. Falconer; they were days full of sad memories and sadder anticipations, yet they could not be altogether dark to one who held unfalteringly her faith in Heaven, and whose heart the glad voices of her children and the assurance of her husband's love still expanded with emotions of grateful joy. A week was busily employed in directing and superintending the arrangements for the reception and comfort of the beloved sufferer. Again the room which Aunt Nancy had taken such pleas-

ure in preparing for Grace five years before, was made ready for her. Isabel recalled with a thrill of the tenderest love the least fancy of her young and unsophisticated taste. The furniture she had preferred was placed again in that apartment, the vases on the old-fashioned carved wooden mantelpiece were filled with the flowers she best loved; for it was now late in February—in Georgia a season of flowers—when orange-trees and myrtles, jessamines and roses, make the air "redolent of perfume." When all had been done which affection could suggest, to gratify the taste or minister to the comfort of the loved one, Isabel closed the door of that pleasant room, and sat long there conjuring up visions of the past; of the years in which she had played or studied there by day or slept by night with Grace. She thought of the beautiful, affectionate, but capricious child, over every hour of whose sunny life love had spread the shelter of his wings; she remembered how they had wept together in their first sorrow, how they had gone forth together from their home, saddened, yet with a boundless hope of a future—better, nobler, more joyous than the past—brooding in their young hearts; and then an image of a face flushed with the excitement and distorted by the evil passions of the gamester flashed for a moment before her, and was followed by that of a pale, drooping invalid, in loneliness and want, folding to her bosom, in mingled grief and love, her last blessing—her child.

"And I—I have never known want or sorrow," cried Isabel, with streaming tears; forgetting for the moment that life had presented to her, too, a cup of bitterness which, had she turned, as Grace had done, to the world for comfort, might have proved to her, too, a cup of death.

From such visions Isabel was called to receive a gentleman. It was Walter Stuart. Walter Stuart's intimacy

with Mr. Falconer had continued without interruption; and when the interests of the profession to which he now seemed entirely devoted, had withdrawn him from Virginia to a distant frontier fort, they had kept up by letters that interchange of thought and feeling which is essential to the activity of friendship. On one subject Walter Stuart never spoke, or wrote to any. He had never been known to name Grace since her marriage; and none, save Mr. Falconer, had courage to press on the stern, cold man he had become, any subject which he desired to avoid. Mr. Falconer, however, always communicated to him any intelligence of more than ordinary interest respecting Grace.

"His silence is from a morbid feeling," he said to Isabel, who expressed her surprise at this, "and a true friend should not encourage him in its indulgence. Besides, he cannot exercise true Christian forgiveness towards Grace, without feeling an interest in her well-being."

In accordance with these views, Mr. Falconer had written to his friend on the eve of his sailing from America, acquainting him with his intended voyage and its cause, and as soon as the tedious, and in such cases most painful formalities of his profession rendered practicable, Walter Stuart had hastened to Virginia—to Isabel, from whom he was assured of receiving the latest intelligence. Isabel had already set out for Oakdale when he arrived at Bellevue, and he followed her.

It was the afternoon of a sunny day in the last week of February, when scarce the lightest chill from winter's parting breath lingered on the balmy air, that the carriage which bore Grace to her home entered the wide avenue leading to it. For the last two or three miles every object had touched some link of that "electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound." The rustling of the breeze through

the dark forest of pines which forms so marked a feature of the scenery on the seacoast of Georgia—the odor of the wild myrtle and the jessamine—the sight of some tree, remembered from her childhood for its fantastic shape —some familiar turn in the road, caused her at every instant to cry out, "My home! my own dear home!" but when she entered the avenue, when the flashing river and its verdant banks, the trees which had shadowed her childish sports, and the house in which she had first entered life, and where she had passed life's golden days, lay before her, she could only stretch out her arms towards these beloved objects as if to clasp them to her heart in speechless delight—a delight that bordered upon agony. The carriage stopped. It had been seen as it came slowly on through the avenue, and the yard was filling fast with an anxious crowd who wrung their hands in silent sorrow, while tears streamed down many of their dark faces, as they gazed from a distance on the pale, thin form that lay, supported by pillows, in a corner of the carriage. Isabel, dreading all excitement for Grace, had prevented their nearer approach. "Miss Grace"—for she was still Miss Grace to them—"will see you all," she promised; "but you must wait till she is rested;" and they waited without a murmur, for they loved her. Isabel herself did not approach the carriage, though her heart bounded as if it would burst from its prison, when she looked upon her husband. Mr. Falconer lifted Grace in his arms, and bearing her into the house, laid her on a sofa in the parlor. She had fainted, and while Miss Elliot bent over her with the restoratives which she was careful to have always at hand, Mr. Falconer turned to clasp Isabel for one moment to his bosom, to ask for his children, and to send up an aspiration of praise to Him who had preserved these blessings for him in his absence.

When the eyes of Grace unclosed, Isabel's tears were falling on her face.

"Oh, Isabel! it is such joy—too much—to be at home! But where is Nanine?"

As Grace spoke, she turned her head to look for her child, and saw a tall form just gliding beyond the range of her vision. Her face flushed for an instant; and seeming to forget her desire to see Nanine, she lay quite still for several minutes, then suddenly looking at Isabel, said, "Is any gentleman here besides Mr. Falconer?" Isabel hesitated, and Grace felt that there was. "Is it Walter Stuart?" she asked in a whisper, while the blood rushed again to her temples.

Isabel saw it was too late for concealment, and with a trembling heart she answered by another question, "Can you see him, Grace?"

Walter Stuart stood near, all coldness, all sternness gone, with a pale face and quivering limbs attesting his agitation. He heard no sound from Grace, and did not dare to stir, till a sign from Isabel invited his approach. He advanced, and bending over Grace in silence—a silence more expressive than words—he pressed one long kiss upon her brow. Not a word was said of forgiveness, of reconciliation—there was no allusion to the past, their hearts were one again; each felt all, knew all that was in the other's heart, without the intervention of words. Death, the great peacemaker, was near them. Once only, Grace looked doubtfully and timidly upon him—it was when Nanine drew near. He read her feelings, and taking the beautiful child in his arms, he held her to his bosom, kissed her tenderly, and said, "You will give her to me, Grace."

"Will you love her, Walter?" cried Grace, while an expression of perfect joy beamed from her eyes: "Now, all my desires are granted, and I can indeed die in peace."

Thus supported and soothed by the tenderest love, did Grace fade gently away. No hireling approached her, even to perform the most menial offices; they were labors of love from the servants, who had grown up in her father's house. Maum Hagar, for whom she early inquired, had gone at last to the rest for which she longed.

And Grace soon followed her. It was a rest to her, too, short as her life had been. It was in Walter Stuart's arms, with her head resting on his bosom, that she passed away. Aunt Nancy and Isabel clasped her cold hands, while Mr. Falconer knelt beside her, uttering in her failing ear the promises of a Father's love, and the tender encouragements of our Saviour, to which the pressure of her fingers feebly responded to the last. She died with a smile upon her lips, which seemed to those around her the smile of welcome to some angelic visitant. Walter Stuart continued to support her till long after she had ceased to breathe, and when he laid her from his arms, he pressed one long kiss upon her pale lips and marble brow; and turning away, left the room without uttering a sound. He went to his own apartment, and there, alone, the smothered agony of years burst forth in sobs, which shook his frame almost to dissolution.

Again Isabel stood within the family burial-place at Oakdale, to which her last visit had been made in company with her who now lay beside the father she had mourned so bitterly that day. The remembrance hushed Isabel's sobs, which Mr. Falconer, on whose arm she leaned, had vainly sought to still.

"Why should we grieve," her heart whispered, "that she has passed from the sorrows of earth to eternal joy?"

But a few weeks had passed since the loved one had been laid there, yet violets were already blooming on her grave. Isabel plucked one of them, and seemed about to

yield to Mr. Falconer's gentle efforts to draw her from the sad scene; but overcome by a sudden rush of recollections, she broke from his restraining arm, and casting herself on her knees beside the green hillock that marked her cousin's last resting-place, covered its sod with tears and kisses. With gentle force Mr. Falconer lifted her from the earth, and bore, rather than led her, beyond the enclosure, and soothed her with the tenderness of the husband and the consoling words of the Christian teacher. As they walked homewards they passed the young Nanine and Elliot at play in a grove within whose shade Isabel and Grace had often sported. Isabel stopped to kiss the children, and as she laid her hand upon the golden curls of Nanine, and looked into a face singularly like her mother's, a fervent prayer arose from her heart that her life might be ruled by purer principles.

The next day Mr. Falconer and Isabel and their children set out for the home in which his mother awaited them with patient, yet longing affection. Walter Stuart lingered a few days longer at Oakdale with Nanine, who was already tenderly attached to him, and whose affection seemed his best earthly consolation. He visited New York on his way to his post, and Mrs. Stuart's heart once more rejoiced in the confidence and sympathy of her son; for sorrow had softened and purified the nature which a proud stoicism had stiffened almost into stone. Nanine had been left by her mother to his guardianship and that of Mr. Falconer; with a request that she might remain at Oakdale with Miss Elliot while she lived, and if she were still unmarried at her death, that her home should be with Isabel. Oakdale, therefore, is still the abode of a young and hopeful heart; and Aunt Nancy has still an object for the exercise of her kindly affections. A cheerful serenity sits upon her brow, though her fondly-loved Grace is never forgotten. Often

the young Nanine wonders, as her good aunt whom she so dearly loves, after gazing with tender sadness in her face for several minutes, suddenly clasps her in her arms and fondly kisses her. At such times Aunt Nancy's heart ascends in fervent prayer, that she may be endued with wisdom to lead the affections of her young charge heavenward, to teach her to "prize, not the honor which cometh from man, but that which cometh from God only."

Mr. Elliot has never resumed business, though his creditors made so liberal a settlement with him, that about ten thousand dollars was saved from the wreck of his splendid fortune. He would have given this to Isabel in return for the still larger sum taken from her, but it was declined both by Mr. Falconer and herself. Mr. Elliot has, therefore, a support independent of his wife's dowry. He has established himself comfortably and pleasantly in the neighborhood of Marion, and not far from Isabel, and his latter years are happier in their attentions and the affection of their children, than was his earlier life in all that display which excited the world's envy. Mrs. Elliot spends the spring and autumn with him, but much of the winter he passes with his sister in Georgia, and she is then enjoying the life she loves, in New York or Washington. In summer she is again absent for two or three months at fashionable watering-places, or other resorts of the gay, and Mr. Elliot cannot accompany her, for that is his season of greatest enjoyment at home—the season that brings all he loves together, for then Aunt Nancy and Nanine make their yearly visit to Isabel. Pleasant is that visit, for in Isabel's home, under the guardianship of the high and holy principles which Mr. Falconer practises as well as teaches, and which have been her own sure guides through life, dwell ever the generous sympathies and gentle affections which make an earthly home a type of heaven. There truth abides; and

one of the first lessons impressed on the youthful mind, is, "Whatsoever thou doest, do it as unto God and not unto men," and whatsoever thou art, BE it and do not SEEM it.

THE END.

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